

THE LOVE-CHASE.

A Comedy.

DEDICATED

TO DANIEL GRANT, ESQ.

OF MANCHESTER,

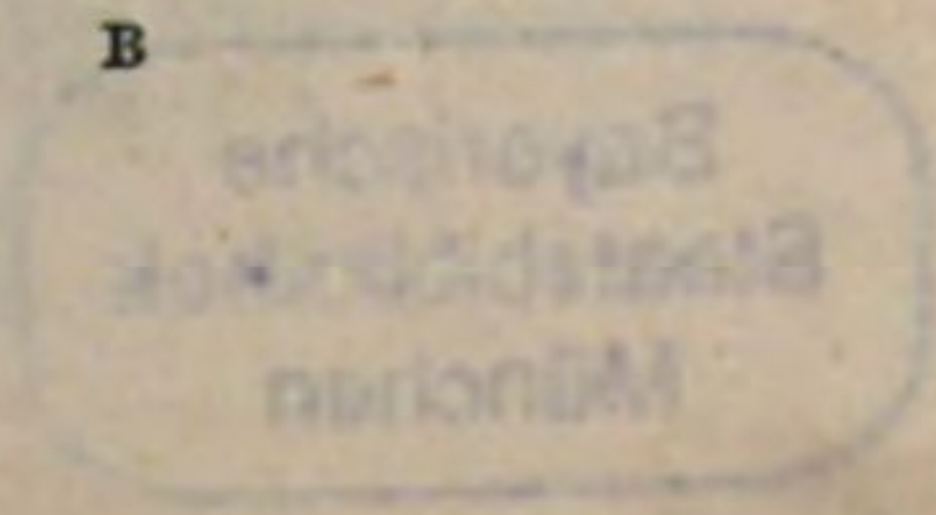
BY HIS ATTACHED AND GRATEFUL SERVANT,

J. S. KNOWLES.

1837.

VOL. II.

B



CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET, IN 1837.)

<i>Sir William Fondlove</i> , an old Baronet	.. Mr. STRICKLAND.
<i>Waller</i>	in love with Lydia, Mr. ELTON.
<i>Wildrake</i>	a Sportsman Mr. WEBSTER.
<i>Trueworth</i>	{ a Friend of Sir William } Mr. HEMMINGS.
<i>Neville</i>	{ Friends to Wal- } Mr. WORRELL.
<i>Humphreys</i>	{ ler } Mr. HUTCHINGS.
<i>Lash</i>	Mr. ROSS.
<i>Chargewell</i>	a Landlord Mr. EDWARDS.
<i>George</i>	a Waiter Mr. BISHOP.
<i>First Lawyer</i>	Mr. RAY.
<i>Widow Green</i>	Mrs. GLOVER.
<i>Constance</i>	{ Daughter to Sir William Fondlove } Mrs. NISBETT.
<i>Lydia</i>	{ Lady's Maid to Widow Green } Miss VANDENHOFF.
<i>Alice</i>	{ Housekeeper to Master Waller } Mrs. TAYLEURE.
<i>Phæbe</i>	Maid to Constance, Miss WRIGHTEN.
<i>Amelia</i>	Miss GALLOT.
<i>First Lady</i>	Mrs. GALLOT.

SCENE—LONDON.

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

THE LOVE-CHASE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Lobby of an Inn.*

Enter CHARGEWELL, hurriedly.

Charg. What, ho there! Ho, sirrahs! More wine! Are the knaves asleep? Let not our guests cool, or we shall starve the till! Good waiting, more than viands and wine, makes the good inn!—George!—Richard!—Ralph!—Where are you?

Enter GEORGE.

George. Here am I, sir!

Charg. Have they taken in more wine to that company?

George. Yes, sir.

Charg. That's right. Serve them as quick as they order! A fair company! I have seen them here, before. Take care they come again. A choice company! That Master Waller, I hear, is a fine spirit—leads the town. Pay him much duty. A deep purse, and ready strings.

George. And there is another, sir;—a capital gentleman, though from the country. A gentleman most learned in dogs and horses! Huntsman and whipper-in, together, were scarce a match for him!—one Master Wildrake. I wish you could hear him, sir.

Charg. Well, well!—attend to them. Let them not cool o'er the liquor, or their calls will grow slack. Keep feeding the fire while it blazes, and the blaze will continue. Look to it well!

George. I will, sir.

Charg. And be careful, above all, that you please Master Waller. He is a guest worth pleasing. He is a true gentleman.—Free order, quick pay!

George. And such, I'll dare be sworn, is the other. A man of mighty stores of knowledge—most learned in dogs and horses! Never was I so edified by the discourse of mortal man.

[They go out severally.]

SCENE II.—*A Room.*

MASTER WALLER, MASTER WILDRAKE, MASTER TRUEWORTH, MASTER NEVILLE, and MASTER HUMPHREYS, *sitting round a table.*

Wal. Well, Master Wildrake, speak you of the chase! To hear you, one bestrides the bounding steed;

You bring the hounds and game, and all to view—
 All scudding to the jovial huntsman's cheer!
 And yet I pity the poor crownéd deer,
 And always fancy 'tis by fortune's spite,
 That lordly head of his, he bears so high—
 Like Virtue, stately in calamity,
 And hunted by the human, worldly hound—
 Is made to fly before the pack, that straight
 Burst into song at prospect of his death.
 You say their cry is harmony; and yet
 The chorus scarce is music to my ear,
 When I bethink me what it sounds to his;
 Nor deem I sweet the note that rings the knell
 Of the once merry forester!

Nev. The same things
 Please us or pain, according to the thought
 We take of them. Some smile at their own death,
 Which most men shrink from, as a beast of prey
 It kills to look upon. But you, who take
 Such pity of the deer, whence follows it
 You hunt more costly game?—the comely maid,
 To wit, that waits on buxom Widow Green?

Hum. The comely maid!—Such term not half the sum
 Of her rich beauty gives! Were rule to go
 By loveliness, I know not in the court,
 Or city, lady might not fitly serve
 That lady serving-maid!

True. Come! your defence?
 Why show you ruth where there's least argument,
 Deny it where there's most? You will not plead?
 Oh, Master Waller, where we wish to hunt,
 We think the sport no crime!

Hum. I give you joy,
 You prosper in your chase.

Wal. Not so! The maid
 In simple honesty I must pronounce
 A miracle of virtue, well as beauty.

Nev. And well do I believe you, Master Waller;
 Those know I who have ventured gift and promise
 But for a minute of her ear—the boon
 Of a poor dozen words spoke through a chink—
 And come off bootless; save the haughty scorn
 That cast their bounties back to them again.

True. That warrants her what Master Waller speaks her.
 Is she so very fair?

Nev. Yes, Master Truworth;
 And I believe indeed as virtuous, too.
 But chastest maid will list to freest suit,
 If Master Waller pleads it. On pretence
 Of sneaking kindness for gay Widow Green,
 He visits her, for sake of her fair maid;
 To whom a glance, or word, avails to hint

His proper errand ; and—as glimpses only
 Beget and whet desire to see the whole—
 Awakens interest to hear the tale
 So stintingly that's told. I know his practice—
 Luck to you, Master Waller ! If you win,
 You merit it, who take the way to win !

Wal. Good, Master Neville !

True. I should laugh to see
 The poacher snared !—the maid, for mistress sought,
 Turn out a wife.

Nev. How say you, Master Waller ?
 Things quite as strange have fallen !

Wal. Impossible !

True. Impossible ! Most possible of things—
 If thou'rt in love ! Where merit lies itself,
 What matters it to want the name, which, weigh'd,
 Is not the worth of so much breath as it takes
 To utter it ! If, but from Nature's hand,
 She is all you could expect of gentle blood,
 Face, form, mien, speech ; with these, what to belong
 To lady more behoves—thoughts delicate,
 Affections generous, and modesty—
 Perfectionating, brightening crown of all !—
 If she hath these—true titles to thy heart—
 What does she lack that's title to thy hand ?
 The *name* of lady, which is none of these,
 But may belong without ? Thou mightst do worse
 Than marry her. Thou wouldst, undoing her,
 Yea, by my mother's name, a shameful act,
 Most shamefully perform'd !

Wal. [*Starting up and drawing.*] Sir !

Nev. [*and the others, interposing.*] Gentlemen !

True. All's right ! Sit down !—I will not draw again.
 A word with you : If—as a man—thou say'st,
 Upon thy honour, I have spoken wrong,
 I'll ask thy pardon !—though I never hold
 Communion with thee more !

Wal. [*After a pause, putting up his sword.*] My sword is
 sheathed ?

Wilt let me take thy hand ?

True. 'Tis thine, good sir,
 And faster than before—A fault confess'd,
 Is a new virtue added to a man !
 Yet let me own some blame was mine. A truth
 May be too harshly told—but 'tis a theme
 I am tender on—I had a sister, sir,—
 You understand me !—'Twas my happiness
 To own her once—I would forget her now !—
 I have forgotten !—I know not if she lives !—
 Things of such strain as we were speaking of,
 Spite of myself, remind me of her !—So !—

Nev. Sit down ! Let's have more wine.

Wild. Not so, good sirs.
Partaking of your hospitality,
I have overlook'd good friends I came to visit,
And who have late become sojourners here—
Old country friends and neighbours, and with whom
I e'en take up my quarters. Master Truworth,
Bear witness for me.

True. It is even so.
Sir William Fondlove and his charming daughter.

Wild. Ay, neighbour Constance. Charming, does he say?
Yes, neighbour Constance is a charming girl
To those that do not know her. If she plies me
As hard as was her custom in the country,
I should not wonder though, this very day,
I seek the home I quitted for a month! [*Aside.*
Good even, gentlemen.

Hum. Nay, if you go,
We all break up, and sally forth together.

Wal. Be it so—Your hand again, good Master Truworth!
I am sorry that I pain'd you.

True. It is yours, sir. [*They go out.*

SCENE III.—*Sir William Fondlove's House.—A Room.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE.

Sir Wil. At sixty-two, to be in leading-strings,
Is an old child—and with a daughter, too!
Her mother held me ne'er in check so strait
As she. I must not go but where she likes,
Nor see but whom she likes, do anything
But what she likes!—A slut, bare twenty-one!
Nor minces she commands!—A brigadier
More coolly could not give his orders out
Than she! Her waiting-maid is aide-de-camp,
My steward adjutant; my lacqueys serjeants,
That bring me her high pleasure how I march
And counter-march—when I'm on duty—when
I'm off—when suits it not to tell it me
Herself—“Sir William, thus my mistress says!”
As saying it were enough—no will of mine
Consulted! I will marry. Must I serve,
Better a wife my mistress, than a daughter!
And yet the vixen says, that if I marry,
I'll find she'll rule my wife, as well as me!

Enter TRUEWORTH.

Ah, Master Truworth! Welcome, Master Truworth!

True. Thanks, sir; I am glad to see you look so well!

Sir Wil. Ah, Master Truworth, when one turns the hill,
'Tis rapid going down! We climb by steps;

By strides we reach the bottom. Look at me,
And guess my age.

True. Turn'd fifty.

Sir Wil. Ten years more!

How marvellously well I wear! I think
You would not flatter me!—But scan me close,
And pryingly, as one who seeks a thing
He means to find—What signs of age dost see?

True. None!

Sir Wil. None about the corners of the eyes?
Lines that diverge like to the spider's joists,
Whereon he builds his airy fortalice?
They call them crow's feet—Has the ugly bird
Been perching there?—Eh?—Well?

True. There's something like,
But not what one must see, unless he's blind
Like steeple on a hill!

Sir Wil. [after a pause]. Your eyes are good!
I am certainly a wonder for my age;
I walk as well as ever! Do I stoop?

True. A plummet from your head would find your heel.

Sir Wil. It is my make—my make, good Master Truworth;
I do not study it. Do you observe
The hollow in my back? That's natural.
As now I stand, so stood I when a child,
A rosy, chubby boy!—I am youthful to
A miracle! My arm is firm as 'twas
At twenty. Feel it!

True. [Feeling *SIR WILLIAM'S* arm.] It is oak!

Sir Wil. Flint—flint

Isn't it, Master Truworth? Thou hast known me
Ten years and upwards. Think'st my leg is shrunk?

True. No.

Sir Wil. No! not in the calf?

True. As big a calf
As ever!

Sir Wil. Thank you, thank you—I believe it!
When others waste, 'tis growing-time with me!
I feel it, Master Truworth! Vigour, sir,
In every joint of me!—could run!—could leap!
Why shouldn't I marry? Knife and fork I play
Better than many a boy of twenty-five—
Why shouldn't I marry? If they come to wine,
My brace of bottles can I carry home,
And ne'er a headache. Death! why shouldn't I marry?

True. I see in nature no impediment.

Sir Wil. Impediment? She's all appliances!—
And fortune's with me, too! The Widow Green
Gives hints to me. The pleasant Widow Green!
Whose fortieth year, instead of autumn, brings
A second summer in. Odds bodikins,
How young she looks! What life is in her eyes!

What ease is in her gait!—while, as she walks,
 Her waist, still tapering, takes it pliantly!
 How lollingly she bears her head withal:
 On this side, now—now, that! When enters she
 A drawing-room, what worlds of gracious things
 Her curtsey says!—she sinks with such a sway,
 Greeting on either hand the company,
 Then slowly rises to her state again!
 She is the empress of the card-table!
 Her hand and arm!—Gods, did you see her deal—
 With curved and pliant wrist dispense the pack,
 Which, at the touch of her fair fingers flies!
 How soft she speaks—how very soft! Her voice
 Comes melting from her round and swelling throat,
 Reminding you of sweetest, mellowest things—
 Plums, peaches, apricots, and nectarines—
 Whose bloom is poor to paint her cheeks and lips.
 By Jove, I'll marry!

True. You forget, Sir William,
 I do not know the lady.

Sir Wil. Great your loss!
 By all the gods I'll marry!—but my daughter
 Must needs be married first. She rules my house;
 Would rule it still, and will not have me wed.
 A clever, handsome, darling, forward minx!
 When I became a widower, the reins
 Her mother dropp'd she caught,—a hoyden girl;
 Nor, since, would e'er give up; howe'er I strove
 To coax or catch them from her. One way still
 Or t'other she would keep them—laugh, pout, plead;
 Now vanquish me with water, now with fire;
 Would box my face, and, ere I well could ope
 My mouth to chide her, stop it with a kiss!
 The monkey! what a plague she's to me! How
 I love her!—How I love the Widow Green!

True. Then marry her!

Sir Wil. I tell thee, first of all
 Must needs my daughter marry. See I not
 A hope of that. She nought affects the sex:
 Comes suitor after suitor—all in vain.
 Fast as they bow she curtsies, and says "Nay!"
 Or she, a woman, lacks a woman's heart,
 Or has a special taste which none can hit.

True. Or taste, perhaps, which is already hit.

Sir Wil. Eh!—how?

True. Remember you no country friend,
 Companion of her walks—her squire to church,
 Her beau whenever she went a-visiting—
 Before she came to town?

Sir Wil. No!

True. None?—art sure?
 No playmate when she was a girl?

Sir Wil. O! ay!
That Master Wildrake, I pray'd thee go
And wait for at the inn; but had forgotten.
Is he come?

True. And in the house. Some friends that met him,
As he alighted, laid strong hands upon him,
And made him stop for dinner. We had else
Been earlier with you.

Sir Wil. Ha! I am glad he is come.

True. She may be smit with him.

Sir Wil. As cat with dog!

True. He heard her voice as we came up the stairs,
And darted straight to join her.

Sir Wil. You shall see
What wondrous calm and harmony take place,
When fire meets gunpowder!

Con. [*without*]. Who sent for you?
What made you come?

Wild. [*without*]. To see the town, not you!
A kiss!

Con. I vow I'll not.

Wild. I swear you shall.

Con. A saucy cub! I vow, I had as lief
Your whipper-in had kiss'd me.

Sir Wil. Do you hear?

True. I do. Most pleasing discords!

Enter CONSTANCE and WILDRAKE.

Con. Father, speak
To neighbour Wildrake!

Sir Wil. Very glad to see him!

Wild. I thank you, good Sir William! Give you joy
Of your good looks!

Con. What, Phœbe!—Phœbe!—Phœbe!

Sir Wil. What want'st thou with thy lap-dog?

Con. Only, sir,
To welcome neighbour Wildrake! What a figure
To show himself in town!

Sir Wil. Wilt hold thy peace?

Con. Yes; if you'll lesson me to hold my laughter!
Wildrake.

Wild. Well?

Con. Let me walk thee in the Park—
How they would stare at thee!

Sir Wil. Wilt ne'er give o'er?

Wild. Nay, let her have her way—I heed her not!
Though to more courteous welcome I have a right;
Although I am neighbour Wildrake! Reason is reason!

Con. And right is right! so welcome, neighbour Wildrake;
I am very, very, very glad to see you!
Come, for a quarter of an hour, we'll e'en
Agree together! How do your horses, neighbour?

Wild. Pshaw!

Con. And your dogs?

Wild. Pshaw!

Con. Whipper-in and huntsman?

Sir Wil. Converse of things thou know'st to talk about!

Con. And keep him silent, father, when I know
He cannot talk of any other things?

How does thy hunter? What a sorry trick
He play'd thee t'other day, to balk his leap
And throw thee, neighbour! Did he balk the leap?

Confess! You sportsmen never are to blame!

Say you are fowlers, 'tis your dog's in fault!

Say you are anglers, 'tis your tackle's wrong;

Say you are hunters, why the honest horse

That bears your weight, must bear your blunders too!

Why, whither go you?

Wild. Anywhere from thee.

Con. With me you mean.

Wild. I mean it not.

Con. You do!

I'll give you fifty reasons for't—and first,

Where you go, neighbour, I'll go!

[*They go out—WILD. pettishly—CONSTANCE laughing.*]

Sir Wil. Do you mark?

Much love is there!

True. Indeed, a heap, or none!

I'd wager on the heap!

Sir Wil. Ay!—Do you think

These discords, as in the musician's art,

Are subtle servitors to harmony?

That all this war's for peace? This wrangling but

A masquerade where love his roguish face

Conceals beneath an ugly visor!—Well?

True. Your guess and my conceit are not a mile

Apart. Unlike to other common flowers,

The flower of love shows various in the bud;

'Twill look a thistle, and 'twill blow a rose!

And with your leave I'll put it to the test;

Affect myself, for thy fair daughter, love—

Make him my confidant—dilate to him

Upon the graces of her heart and mind,

Feature and form—that well may comment bear—

Till—like the practised connoisseur, who finds

A gem of heart out in a household picture

The unskill'd owner held so cheap he grudged

Renewal of the chipp'd and tarnish'd frame,

But values now as priceless—I arouse him

Into a quick sense of the worth of that

Whose merit hitherto, from lack of skill,

Or dulling habit of acquaintanceship,

He has not been awake to.

Con. [*without*]. Neighbour Wildrake!

Sir Wil. Hither they come. I fancy well thy game!

O to be free to marry Widow Green!
I'll call her hence, anon—then ply him well.

[SIR WILLIAM goes out.]

Wild. [without]. Nay, neighbour Constance!

True. He is high in storm.

Enter WILDRAKE and CONSTANCE.

Wild. To Lincolnshire, I tell thee.

Con. Lincolnshire!

What, prithee, takes thee off to Lincolnshire?

Wild. Too great delight in thy fair company.

True. Nay, Master Wildrake, why away so soon?
You are scarce a day in town!—Extremes like this,
And starts of purpose, are the signs of love,
Though immatured as yet.

[*Aside.*]

Con. He's long enough
In town! What should he here? He's lost in town:
No man is he for concerts, balls, or routs!
No game he knows at cards, save rare Pope Joan!
He ne'er could master dance beyond a jig;
And as for music, nothing to compare
To the melodious yelping of a hound,
Except the braying of his huntsman's horn!
Ask him to stay in town!

Sir Wil. [without]. Hoa, Constance!

Con. Sir!—

Neighbour, a pleasant ride to Lincolnshire!
Good bye!

Sir Wil. [without]. Why, Constance!

Con. Coming, sir, Shake hands!
Neighbour, good bye! Don't look so woe-begone;
'Tis but a two-days' ride, and thou wilt see
Rover, and Spot, and Nettle, and the rest
Of thy dear country friends!

Sir Wil. [without]. Constance! I say.

Con. Anon!—Commend me to the gentle souls,
And pat them for me!—Will you, neighbour Wildrake?

Sir Wil. [without]. Why, Constance! Constance!

Con. In a moment, sir!
Good bye!—I'd cry, dear neighbour—if I could!
Good bye!—A pleasant day when next you hunt!
And, prithee, mind thy horse don't balk his leap!
Good bye—and, after dinner, drink my health!
“A bumper, sirs, to neighbour Constance!”—Do!—
And give it with a speech, wherein unfold
My many graces, more accomplishments,
And virtues topping either—in a word,
How I'm the fairest, kindest, best of neighbours!

[*They go out severally.*—TRUEWORTH trying to pacify
WILDRAKE—CONSTANCE laughing.]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Sir William's House.**Enter TRUEWORTH and WILDRAKE.*

Wild. Nay, Master Trueworth, I must needs be gone !
 She treats me worse and worse ! I am a stock,
 That words have none to pay her. For her sake
 I quit the town to-day. I like a jest,
 But hers are jests past bearing. I am her butt,
 She nothing does but practise on ! A plague !—
 Fly her shafts ever your way ?

True. Would they did !

Wild. Art mad ?—or wishest she should drive thee so ?

True. Thou knowest her not.

Wild. I know not neighbour Constance ?
 Then know I not myself, or anything
 Which as myself I know !

True. Heigh ho !

Wild. Heigh ho !

Why what a burden that for a man's song !
 'Twould fit a maiden that was sick for love.
 Heigh ho ! Come ride with me to Lincolnshire,
 And turn thy "heigh ho !" into "hilly ho !"

True. Nay, rather tarry thou in town with me.
 Men sometimes find a friend's hand of avail,
 When useless proves their own. Wilt lend me thine ?

Wild. Or may my horse break down in steeple-chase !

True. A steeple-chase. What made thee think of that ?
 I'm for the steeple—not to ride a race,
 Only to get there !—nor alone, in sooth,
 But in fair company !

Wild. Thou'rt not in love ?

True. Heigh ho !

Wild. Thou wouldst not marry ?

True. With your help.

Wild. And whom, I prithee ?

True. Gentle Mistress Constance !

Wild. What !—neighbour Constance ?—Never did I dream
 That mortal man would fall in love with her. [*Aside*]

In love with neighbour Constance !—I feel strange
 At thought that she should marry !—[*Aside.*] Go to church
 With neighbour Constance ! That's a steeple-chase
 I never thought of. I feel very strange !

What seest in neighbour Constance ?

True. Lover's eyes
 See with a vision proper to themselves ;
 Yet thousand eyes will vouch what mine affirm.
 First, then, I see in her the mould express
 Of woman—stature, feature, body, limb—

Breathing the gentle sex, we value most,
When most 'tis at antipodes with ours!

Wild. You mean that neighbour Constance is a woman?
Why, yes; she is a woman certainly.

True. So much for person. Now for her complexion.
What shall we liken to her dainty skin?
Her arm for instance?—

Wild. Snow will match it.

True. Snow!

It is her arm without the smoothness on't;
Then is not snow transparent? 'Twill not do.

Wild. A pearl's transparent!

True. So it is, but yet
Yields not elastic to the thrilled touch!
I know not what to liken to her arm
Except its beauteous fellow! O, to be
The chosen friend of two such neighbours!

Wild. Would
His tongue would make a halt. He makes too free
With neighbour Constance! Can't he let her arms
Alone! I trust their chosen friend
Will ne'er be he! I'm vex'd.

[*Aside.*]

True. But graceful things
Grow doubly graceful in the graceful use!
Hast mark'd her, ever, walk the drawing-room?

Wild. [*snappishly*]. No.

True. No! Why, where have been your eyes?

Wild. In my head!

But I begin to doubt if open yet.

[*Aside.*]

True. Yet that's a trifle to the dance; down which
She floats as though she were a form of air;
The ground feels not her foot, or tells not on't;
Her movements are the painting of the strain,
Its swell, its fall, its mirth, its tenderness!
Then is she fifty Constances!—each moment
Another one, and each, except its fellow,
Without a peer! You have danced with her?

Wild. I hate
To dance! I can't endure to dance!—Of course
You have danced with her?

True. I have.

Wild. You have?

True. I have.

Wild. I do abominate to dance!—Could carve
Fiddlers and company! A dancing man
To me was ever like a dancing dog!
Save less to be endured!—Ne'er saw I one
But I bethought me of the master's whip.

True. A man might bear the whip to dance with her!

Wild. Not if I had the laying of it on!

True. Well; let that pass. The lady is the theme.

Wild. Yes; make an end of it!—I'm sick of it. [*Aside.*]

True. How well she plays the harpsichord and harp !
How well she sings to them ! Whoe'er would prove
The power of song, should hear thy neighbour sing,
Especially a love-song !

Wild. Does she sing
Such songs to thee ?

True. O yes, and constantly.
For such I ever ask her.

Wild. Forward minx ! [*Aside.*
Maids should not sing love-songs to gentlemen !
Think'st neighbour Constance is a girl to love ?

True. A girl to love ?—Ay, and with all her soul !

Wild. How know you that ?

True. I have studied close the sex.

Wild. You town-rakes are the devil for the sex ! [*Aside.*

True. Not your most sensitive and serious maid
I'd always take for deep impressions. Mind
The adage of the bow. The pensive brow
I have oft seen bright in wedlock, and anon
O'ercast in widowhood ; then, bright again,
Ere half the season of the weeds was out ;
While, in the airy one, I've known one cloud
Forerunner of a gloom that ne'er clear'd up—
So would it prove with neighbour Constance. Not
On superficial grounds she'll ever love :
But once she does, the odds are ten to one
Her first love is her last !

Wild. I wish I ne'er
Had come to town ! I was a happy man
Among my dogs and horses. [*Aside.*] Hast thou broke
Thy passion to her ?

True. Never.

Wild. Never ?

True. No.

I hoped you'd act my proxy there.

Wild. I thank you.

True. I knew 'twould be a pleasure to you.

Wild. Yes ;

A pleasure !—an unutterable pleasure !

True. Thank you ! You make my happiness your own.

Wild. I do.

True. I see you do. Dear Master Wildrake !
O, what a blessing is a friend in need !
You'll go and court your neighbour for me ?

Wild. Yes.

True. And says she " nay " at first, you'll press again.

Wild. Ay, and again !

True. There's one thing I mistrust—yea, most mistrust,
That of my poor deserts you'll make too much.

Wild. Fear anything but that.

True. 'Twere better far
You slightly spoke of them.

Wild. You think so?

True. Yes,

Or rather did not speak of them at all.

Wild. You think so?

True. Yes.

Wild. Then I'll not say a word
About them.

True. Thank you! A judicious friend
Is better than a zealous—You are both!
I see you'll plead my cause as 'twere your own;
Then stay in town, and win your neighbour for me;
Make me the envy of a score of men
That die for her as I do.—Make her mine,
And when the last "Amen!" declares complete
The mystic tying of the holy knot,
And 'fore the priest she stands a blushing wife,
Be thine the right to claim the second kiss
She pays for change from maidenhood to wifehood. [*Goes out.*]

Wild. Take that thyself! The first be mine, or none!
A man in love with neighbour Constance!—Never
Dream'd I that such a thing could come to pass!
Such person, such endowments, such a soul!
I never thought to ask myself before
If she were man or woman! Suitors, too,
Dying for her! I'll e'en make one among 'em!
Woo her to go to church along with him,
And for my pains the privilege to take
The second kiss? I'll take the second kiss,
And first one too—and last! No man shall touch
Her lips but me. I'll massacre the man
That looks upon her! Yet what chance have I
With lovers of the town, whose study 'tis
To please your lady belles!—who dress, walk, talk,
To hit their tastes—what chance, a country squire
Like me? Yet your true fair, I have heard, prefers
The man before his coat at any time;
And such a one may neighbour Constance be.
I'll show a limb with any of them! Silks
I'll wear, nor keep my legs in cases more!
I'll learn to dance town-dances, and frequent
Their concerts! Die away at melting strains,
Or seem to do so—far the easier thing,
And as effective quite; leave nought undone
To conquer neighbour Constance.

Enter LASH.

Lash. Sir.

Wild. Well, sir?

Lash. So please you, sir, your horse is at the door.

Wild. Unsaddle him again and put him up.

And, hark you, get a tailor for me, sir—
The rarest can be found.

Lash. The man's below, sir,
That owns the mare your worship thought to buy.

Wild. Tell him I do not want her, sir.

Lash. I vow,
You will not find her match in Lincolnshire.

Wild. Go to! She's spavin'd.

Lash. Sir!

Wild. Touch'd in the wind.

Lash. I trust my master be not touch'd in the head! [*Aside.*
I vow, a faultless beast!

Wild. I want her not,
And that's your answer—Go to the hosier's, sir,
And bid him send me samples of his gear,
Of twenty different kinds.

Lash. I will, sir.—Sir!

Wild. Well, sir.

Lash. Squire Brush's huntsman's here, and says
His master's kennel is for sale.

Wild. The dogs
Are only fit for hanging!

Lash. Finer bred—

Wild. Sirrah, if more to me thou talk'st of dogs,
Horses, or aught that to thy craft belongs,
Thou mayst go hang for me!—A cordwainer
Go fetch me straight—the choicest in the town.

Away, sir! Do thy errands smart and well
As thou canst crack thy whip! [*LASH goes out.*] Dear
neighbour Constance,
I'll give up horses, dogs, and all for thee! [*Goes out.*

SCENE II.

Enter WIDOW GREEN and LYDIA.

W. Green. Lydia, my gloves. If Master Waller calls,
I shall be in at three; and say the same
To old Sir William Fondlove. Tarry yet!—
What progress think you make I in the heart
Of fair young Master Waller? Gods, my girl,
It is a heart to win, and man, as well!
How speed I, think you? Didst, as I desired,
Detain him in my absence when he call'd,
And, without seeming, sound him touching me?

Lydia. Yes.

W. Green. And affects he me, or not? How guess you?
What said he of me? Look'd he balk'd, or not,
To find me not at home? Inquired he, when
I would be back, as much he long'd to see me?
What did he—said he? Come!—Is he in love,
Or like to fall into it? Goes well my game,
Or shall I have my labour for my pains?

Lydia. I think he is in love.—O poor evasion!
O to love truth, and yet not dare to speak it! [Aside.

W. Green. You think he is in love?—I'm sure of it!
As well have ask'd you has he eyes and ears,
And brain and heart to use them? Maidens throw
Trick after trick away, but widows know
To play their cards! How am I looking, Lydia?

Lydia. E'en as you ever look.

W. Green. Handsome, my girl?
Eh? Clear in my complexion? Eh?—brimful
Of spirits? not too much of me, nor yet
Too little?—Eh?—A woman worth a man?
Look at me, Lydia! Would you credit, girl,
I was a scarecrow before marriage?

Lydia. Nay!—

W. Green. Girl, but I tell thee "yea." That gown of thine—
And thou art slender—would have hung about me!
There's something of me now! good sooth, enough!
Lydia, I'm quite contented with myself;
I'm just the thing, methinks, a widow should be.
So, Master Waller, you believe, affects me?
But, Lydia, not enough to hook the fish;
To prove the angler's skill, it must be caught;
And lovers, Lydia, like the angler's prey—
Which, when he draws it near the landing-place,
Takes warning and runs out the slender line,
And with a spring perchance jerks off the hold—
When we do fish for them, and hook, and think
They are all but in the creel, will make the dart
That sets them free to roam the flood again!

Lydia. Is't so?

W. Green. Thou'lt find it so, or better luck
Than many another maid! Now mark me, Lydia,
Sir William Fondlove fancies me. 'Tis well!
I do not fancy him! What should I do
With an old man?—Attend upon the gout,
Or the rheumatics! Wrap me in the cloud
Of a darken'd chamber—'stead of shining out,
The sun of balls, and routs, and gala-days!
But he affects me, Lydia; so he may!
Now take a lesson from me—Jealousy
Had better go with open, naked breast,
Than pinn'd or button'd with a gem—Less plague,
The plague-spot; that comes quickly to an end
One way or t'other, girl—Yet, never love
Was warm without a spice of jealousy.
Thy lesson now—Sir William Fondlove's rich,
And riches, though they're paste, yet being many,
We often cast the jewel love away for.
I use him but for Master Waller's sake
Dost like my policy?

Lydia. You will not chide me?

W. Green. Nay, Lydia, I am pleased to hear thy thoughts,
They are such novel things—plants that thrive well
With country air! I marvel still they flower,
And thou so long in town! Speak freely, girl!

Lydia. I cannot think love thrives by artifice,
Or wears disguise, if it be love indeed.
I would not hide one portion of my heart
From him I gave it to deservedly,
Nor feign a wish, to mask a wish that was,
Howe'er to prosper. For no cause except
Myself would I be loved. What were't to me,
My lover valued me the more, the more
He saw me precious in another's eyes,
When his alone the vision I would show
Deserving in? I have sought the reason oft,
They paint Love as a child, and still have thought,
It was because true love, like infancy,
Frank, trusting, unobservant of its mood,
Avows its wish at once, and means no more!

W. Green. Thou'lt find out better when thy time is come.
Now wouldst believe I love not Master Waller?
I never knew what love was, Lydia——
That is, as your romances have it. First,
I married for a fortune. Having that,
And being freed from him that brought it me,
I marry now, to please my vanity,
A man that is the fashion. O the delight
Of a sensation, and yourself the cause!
To note the stir of eyes, and ears, and tongues,
When they shall usher Mistress Waller in,
Late Widow Green, her hand upon the arm
Of her young, handsome husband!—How my fan
Will be in requisition—I protest
My heart begins to flutter now—my blood
To mount into my cheek! My honey-moon
Will be a month of triumphs!—"Mistress Waller!"
That name, for which a score of damsels sigh,
And but the widow had the wit to win!
Why it will be the talk of east and west,
And north and south!—The *children* loved the man,
And lost him so—I liked, but there I stopp'd;
For what is it to love, but mind and heart
And soul upon another to depend?
Depend upon another?—Nothing be
But what another wills?—Give up the rights
Of mine own brain and heart?—I thank my stars
I never came to that extremity. [Goes out.]

Lydia. She never loved, indeed!—She knows not love,
Except what's told of it!—She never felt it.
To stem a torrent, easy, looking at it;
But once you venture in, you nothing know
Except the speed with which you're borne away,

Howe'er you strive to check it. She suspects not
 Her maid, not she, brings Master Waller hither.
 Nor dare I undeceive her. Well might she say
 Her young and handsome husband! Yet his face
 And person are the least of him, and vanish
 When shines his soul out through his open eye!
 He all but says he loves me!—His respect
 Has vanquish'd me! He looks the will to speak
 His passion, and the fear that ties his tongue—
 The fear?—He loves not honestly!—and yet
 I'll swear he loves!—I'll swear he honours me!
 It is but my condition that's a bar,
 Denies him give me all! But knew he me
 Well as I know myself!—Whate'er his purpose,
 When next we speak, he shall declare it to me. [Goes out.]

SCENE III.—*Sir William Fondlove's.*

Enter CONSTANCE, *dressed for riding*, and PHOEBE.

Con. Well, Phoebe, would you know me? Are those locks
 That cluster on my forehead and my cheek,
 Sufficient mask? Show I what I would seem,
 A lady for the chase? My darken'd brows
 And heighten'd colour, foreign to my face,
 Do they my face pass off for stranger too?
 What think you?

Phoebe. That he'll ne'er discover you.

Con. Then send him to me—Say a lady wants
 To speak with him—unless indeed it be
 A man in lady's gear—I look so bold
 And speak so gruff! Away [*PHOEBE goes out.*] That I am glad
 He stays in town, I own; but, if I am,
 'Tis only for the tricks I'll play upon him;
 And now begin—persuading him his fame
 Hath made me fancy him, and brought me hither
 On visit to his worship. Soft! his foot!
This he? Why, what has metamorphosed him,
 And changed my sportsman to fine gentleman?
 Well he becomes his clothes!—But check my wonder,
 Lest I forget myself—Why, what an air
 The fellow hath!—A man to set a cap at!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Kind lady, I attend your fair commands.

Con. My veiled face denies me justice, sir,
 Else would you see a maiden's blushing cheek
 Do penance for her forwardness—too late,
 I own, repented of. Yet if 'tis true,
 By our own hearts of others we may judge,

I run no peril showing mine to you,
 Whose heart, I'm sure, is noble. Worthy sir,
 Souls attract souls, when they're of kindred vein.
 The life that you love, I love. Well I know,
 'Mongst those who breast the feats of the bold chase,
 You stand without a peer; and for myself
 I dare avow 'mong such, none follows them
 With heartier glee than I do!

Wild. Churl were he
 That would gainsay you, madam!

Con. [*Curtsyng.*] What delight
 To back the flying steed, that challenges
 The wind for speed!—seems native more of air
 Than earth!—whose burden only lends him fire!—
 Whose soul, in his task, turns labour into sport!
 Who makes your pastime his! I sit him now!
 He takes away my breath!—He makes me reel!
 I touch not earth—I see not—hear not—All
 Is ecstasy of motion!

Wild. You are used,
 I see, to the chase.

Con. I am, sir! Then the leap,
 To see the saucy barrier, and know
 The mettle that can clear it! Then, your time
 To prove you master of the manège. Now
 You keep him well together for a space,
 Both horse and rider braced as you were one,
 Scanning the distance—then you give him rein,
 And let him fly at it, and o'er he goes
 Light as a bird on wing.

Wild. 'Twere a bold leap,
 I see, that turn'd you, madam.

Con. [*Curtsyng.*] Sir you're good!
 And then the hounds, sir! Nothing I admire
 Beyond the running of the well-train'd pack.
 The training's everything! Keen on the scent!
 At fault, none losing heart!—but all at work!
 None leaving his task to another!—answering
 The watchful huntsman's caution, check, or cheer,
 As steed his rider's rein! Away they go!
 How close they keep together!—What a pack!
 Nor turn, nor ditch, nor stream divides them—as
 They moved with one intelligence, act, will!
 And then the concert they keep up!—enough
 To make one tenant of the merry wood,
 To list their jocund music!

Wild. You describe
 The huntsman's pastime to the life!

Con. I love it!
 To wood and glen, hamlet and town, it is
 A laughing holiday!—Not a hill-top
 But's then alive! Footmen with horsemen vie,

All earth's astir, roused with the revelry
Of vigour, health, and joy!—Cheer awakes cheer,
While Echo's mimic tongue, that never tires,
Keeps up the hearty din! Each face is then
Its neighbour's glass—where gladness sees itself,
And at the bright reflection, grows more glad!
Breaks into tenfold mirth!—laughs like a child!
Would make a gift of its heart, it is so free!
Would scarce accept a kingdom; 'tis so rich!
Shakes hands with all, and vows it never knew
That life was life before!

Wild. Nay, every way
You do fair justice, lady, to the chase;
But fancies change.

Con. Such fancy is not mine.

Wild. I would it were not mine, for your fair sake.
I have quite given o'er the chase.

Con. You say not so!

Wild. Forsworn, indeed, the sportsman's life, and gown,
As you may partly see, town-gentleman.
I care not now to mount a steed, unless
To amble 'long the street; no paces mind,
Except my own, to walk the drawing-room,
Or in the ball-room to come off with grace;
No leap for me, to match the light coupé;
No music like the violin and harp—
To which the huntsman's dog and horn I find
Are somewhat coarse and homely minstrelsy:
Then fields of ill-dress'd rustics, you'll confess,
Are well-exchanged for rooms of beaux and belles;
In short, I've ta'en another thought of life—
Become another man!

Con. The cause, I pray?

Wild. The cause of causes, lady.

[Sighs deeply.
[Aside.

Con. He's in love!

Wild. To you, of women, I would name it last;
Yet your frank bearing merits like return;
I, that pursued the game, am caught myself
In chase I never dream'd of!

[Goes out.

Con. He is in love!

Wildrake's in love! That keeps the youth in town,
Turns him from sportsman to town-gentleman.
I never dream'd that he would fall in love!
In love with whom?—I'll find the vixen out!
What right has she to set her cap at him?
I warrant her, a forward artful minx!
I hate him worse than ever.—I'll do all
I can to spoil the match. He'll never marry—
Sure he will never marry! He will have
More sense than that! My back doth ope and shut—
My temples throb and shoot—I am cold and hot!
Were he to marry, there would be an end

To neighbour Constance—neighbour Wildrake—why
I should not know myself!

Enter TRUEWORTH.

Dear Master Truworth,
What think you!—neighbour Wildrake is in love!
In love!—Would you believe it, Master Truworth?
Ne'er heed my dress and looks, but answer me.
Know'st thou of any lady he has seen
That's like to cozen him?

True. I am not sure—

We talk'd to-day about the Widow Green!

Con. Her that my father fancies.—Let him wed her!
Marry her to-morrow—if he will, to-night.
I can't spare neighbour Wildrake—neighbour Wildrake!
Although I would not marry him myself,
I could not bear that other married him!
Go to my father—'tis a proper match!
He has my leave! He's welcome to bring home
The Widow Green. I'll give up house and all!
She would be mad to marry neighbour Wildrake;
He would wear out her patience—plague her to death,
As he does me.—She must not marry him! [*They go out.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Widow Green's.*

Enter MASTER WALLER, following LYDIA.

Wal. But thou shalt hear me, gentle Lydia.
Sweet maiden, thou art frighten'd at thyself!
Thy own perfections 'tis that talk to thee.
Thy beauty rich!—Thy richer grace!—thy mind,
More rich again than that, though richest each!
Except for these, I had no tongue for thee,
Eyes for thee!—ears!—had never follow'd thee!
Had never loved thee, Lydia!—Hear me!—

Lydia. Love

Should seek its match.—No match am I for thee.

Wal. Right! Love should seek its match; and that is,
love

Or nothing! Station—fortune—find their match
In things resembling them. They are not love!
Comes love—that subtle essence, without which
Life were but leaden dulness!—weariness!
A plodding trudger on a heavy road!—
Comes it of tittle-deeds which fools may boast?

Or coffers vilest hands may hold the keys of?
 O, no! It comes of hearts to hearts attracted
 By irresistible affinity.
 You reason right! Yes; love should seek its match—
 Then, Lydia, give my love its match in thine,
 And make me lord of happiness, so rich
 As monarchs have no thought of on their thrones,
 Though kingdoms bear them up.

Lydia. Wast thou a monarch,
 Me wouldst thou make thy queen?

Wal. I would.

Lydia. What!—Pass
 A princess by for me?

Wal. I would.

Lydia. Suppose
 Thy subjects would prevent thee?

Wal. Then, in spite
 Of them!

Lydia. Suppose they were too strong for thee?

Wal. Why then, I'd give them up my throne—content
 With that thou'dst yield me in thy gentle breast.

Lydia. Can subjects do what monarchs do?

Wal. Far more!
 Far less!

Lydia. Among those things, where more their power,
 Is marriage one?

Wal. Yes.

Lydia. And no part of love,
 You say, is rank or wealth?

Wal. No part of love.

Lydia. Is marriage part of love?

Wal. At times it is,
 At times is not. Men love and marry—love
 And marry not.

Lydia. Then have they not the power;
 So must they, hapless, part with those they love!

Wal. O no! not part! How could they love and part?

Lydia. How could they love not part, not free to wed?

Wal. Alone in marriage doth not union lie!

Lydia. Alone where hands are free!—O yes—alone!
 Love that is love, bestoweth all it can!

It is protection, if 'tis anything,
 Which nothing in its object leaves exposed
 Its care can shelter.—Love that's free to wed,
 Not wedding, but profanes the name of love;
 Which is, on warrant higher far than Earth's,
 For Heaven sat approving at its feast,
 A holy thing!—Why make you love to me?
 Women whose hearts are free, by nature tender,
 Their fancies hit by those they are besought by,
 Will first impressions quickly—deeply take;
 And, balk'd in their election, have been known

To droop a whole life through! Gain for a maid,
A broken heart! to barter her young love,
And find she changed it for a counterfeit!

Wal. If there is truth in man, I love thee!—Hear me!
In wedlock, families claim property.
Old notions, which we needs must humour, often
Bar us to wed where we are forced to love!
Thou hear'st?

Lydia. I do.

Wal. My family is proud;
Our ancestor, whose arms we bear, achieved
An earldom by his deeds. 'Tis not enough
I please myself!—I must please others, who
In wealth and station only see desert.
Thou hear'st?

Lydia. I do.

Wal. I cannot marry thee,
And must I lose thee?—Do not turn away!
Without the altar I can honour thee!
Can cherish thee, nor swear it to the priest;
For more than life I love thee!

Lydia. Say thou hatest me,
And I'll believe thee!—Wherein differs love
From hate, to do the work of hate—destroy?
Thy ancestor won title by his deeds!
Was one of them, to teach an honest maid
The deed of sin—first steal her love, and then
Her virtue? If thy family is proud,
Mine, sir, is worthy! if we are poor, the lack
Of riches, sir, is not the lack of shame,
That I should act a part, would raise a blush,
Nor fear to burn an honest brother's cheek!
Thou wouldst share a throne with me!—Thou wouldst rob
me of

A throne!—reduce me from dominion to
Base vassalage!—pull off my crown for me,
And give my forehead in its place a brand!
You have insulted me.—To show you, sir,
The heart you make so light of, you are beloved—
But she that tells you so, tells you beside
She ne'er beholds you more!

[Goes out.]

Wal. Stay, Lydia!—No!—
'Tis vain! She is in virtue resolute,
As she is bland and tender in affection!
No mood but well becomes her—yea, adorns her.
She turns unsightly anger into beauty!
Sour scorn grows sweetness, touching her sweet lips!
And indignation, lighting on her brow,
Transforms to brightness as the cloud to gold
That overhangs the sun! I love her!—Ay!
And all the throes of serious passion feel
At thought of losing her!—so, my light love,

Which but her beauty first affected, now
Her soul has metamorphosed—made a thing
Of solid thoughts and wishes—I must have her!

Enter WIDOW GREEN, unnoticed by WALLER, who continues abstracted.

W. Green. What!—Master Waller, and contemplative!
Presumptive proof of love! Of me he thinks!
Revolves the point “to be or not to be!”
“To be!” by all the triumphs of my sex!
There was a sigh! My life upon’t, that sigh,
If construed, would translate “Dear Widow Green!”

Wal. Enchanting woman!

W. Green. That is I!—most deep
Abstraction, sure concomitant of love.
Now could I see his busy fancy’s painting,
How should I blush to gaze upon myself!

Wal. The matchless form of woman! The choice culling
Of the aspiring artist, whose ambition
Robs Nature to out-do her—the perfections
Of her rare various workmanship combines
To aggrandize his art at Nature’s cost,
And make a paragon!

W. Green. Gods! how he draws me!
Soon as he sees me at my feet he falls!
Good Master Waller!

Wal. Ha! The Widow Green!

W. Green. He is confounded!—So am I. O dear!
How catching is emotion.—He can’t speak!
O beautiful confusion! Amiable
Excess of modesty with passion struggling!
Now comes he to declare himself, but wants
The courage.—I must help him.—Master Waller!

Enter SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE.

Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

Wal. Thank

My lucky stars!

[*Aside.*

W. Green. I would he had the gout,
And kept his room! [*Aside.*] You’re welcome, dear Sir
William!

’Tis very, very kind of you to call.
Sir William Fondlove—Master Waller. Pray
Be seated, gentlemen.—He shall requite me
For his untimely visit. Though the nail
Be driven home, it may want clinching, yet,
To make the hold complete! For that, I’ll use him. [*Aside.*
You’re looking monstrous well, Sir William! and
No wonder. You’re a mine of happy spirits!
Some women talk of such and such a style
Of features in a man.—Give me good humour;

That lights the homeliest visage up with beauty,
And makes the face, where beauty is already,
Quite irresistible!

Sir Wil. That's hitting hard.

[*Aside.*

Dear Widow Green, don't say so! On my life
You flatter me.—You almost make me blush!

W. Green. I durst not turn to Master Waller now,
Nor need I.—I can fancy how he looks!

I warrant me he scowls on poor Sir William,

As he could eat him up.—I must improve

His discontent; and, so, make sure of him.

[*Aside.*

I flatter you, Sir William! O, you men!

You men, that talk so meek, and all the while

Know your own power so well! Now who would think

You had a marriageable daughter! You

Must sure have married young.

Sir Wil. A boy!—a boy!

Who knew not his own mind.

W. Green. Your daughter's twenty.

Come, you at least were twenty when you married;

That makes you forty.

Sir Wil. O dear! Widow Green.

W. Green. Not forty?

Sir Wil. Nay, you quite embarrass me!

I own I have the feelings of a boy,

The freshness and the glow of spring-time, yet,—

The relish, yet, for my young school-days' sports;

Could whip a top—could shoot at taw—could play

At prison-bars and leap-frog—if I might—

Not with a limb, perhaps, as supple, but

With quite as supple will.—Yet I confess

To more than forty!

W. Green. Do you say so? Well,

I'll never guess a man's age by his looks

Again.—Poor Master Waller! He must writhe

To hear I think Sir William is so young.

I'll turn his visit yet to more account.

[*Aside.*

A handsome ring, Sir William, that you wear!

Sir Wil. Pray look at it.

W. Green. The mention of a ring

Will take his breath away.

Wal. She must be mine

Whate'er her terms!

[*Aside.*

W. Green. I'll steal a look at him!

Wal. What! though it be the ring?—the marriage ring?

If that she sticks at, she deserves to wear it!

Oh, the debate which love and prudence hold!

[*Aside.*

W. Green. How highly he is wrought upon!—His hands

Are clench'd!—I warrant me his frame is shaking!

Poor Master Waller! I have fill'd his heart

Brimful with passion for me.—The delight

Of proving thus my power!

Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green!—
She hears not! How the ring hath set her thinking!
I'll try and make her jealous. [*Aside.*]—Widow Green!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

Sir Wil. Would you think that ring
Could tell a story?

W. Green. Could it? Ah, Sir William!
I fear you are a rogue!

Sir Wil. O no!

W. Green. You are!

Sir Wil. No, on my honour! Would you like to hear
The story of the ring?

W. Green. Much,—very much.

Sir Wil. Think'st we may venture draw our chairs apart
A little more from Master Waller?

W. Green. Yes.

He'll bring it to a scene! Dear—Dear Sir William,
How much I am obliged to him! A scene!
Gods, we shall have a scene!—Good Master Waller,
Your leave I pray you for a minute, while
Sir William says a word or two to me.
He durst not trust his tongue for jealousy! [*Aside.*
Now, dear Sir William!

Sir Wil. You must promise me
You will not think me vain.

W. Green. No fear of that.

Sir Wil. Nor given to boast.

W. Green. O! dear Sir William!

Sir Wil. Nor

A flirt!

W. Green. O! who would take you for a flirt?

Sir Wil. How very kind you are!

W. Green. Go on, Sir William.

Sir Wil. Upon my life, I fear you'll think me vain!
I'm cover'd with confusion at the thought
Of what I've done. 'Twas very, very wrong
To promise you the story of the ring;
Men should not talk of such things.

W. Green. Such as what?

As ladies' favours?

Sir Wil. 'Pon my life, I feel
As I were like to sink into the earth.

W. Green. A lady then it was that gave it you?

Sir Wil. Don't ask me to say yes, but only scan
The inside of the ring. How much she's moved. [*Aside.*

Wal. They to each other company enough!
I, company for no one but myself.

I'll take my leave, nor trouble them to pay
The compliments of parting. Lydia! Lydia! [*Goes out.*

W. Green. What's here? "Eliza!"—So it *was* a lady!
How wondrously dear Master Waller bears it.
He surely will not hold much longer out. [*Aside.*

Sir William! Nay, look up! What cause to cast
Your eyes upon the ground? What an it were
A lady?

Sir Wil. You're not angry?

W. Green. No!

Sir Wil. She is.

I'll take the tone she speaks in 'gainst the word,
For fifty crowns. I have not told you all
About the ring; though I would sooner die
Than play the braggart!—yet as truth is truth,
And told by halves, may from a simple thing,
By misconstruction, to a monster grow,
I'll tell the whole truth!

W. Green. Dear Sir William, do!

Sir Wil. The lady was a maid, and very young;
Nor there in justice to her must I stop,
But say that she was beautiful as young;
And add to that, that she was learned too,
Almost enough to win for her that title,
Our sex, in poor conceit of their own merits,
And narrow spirit of monopoly,
And jealousy, which gallantry eschews,
Bestow on women who assert their right
To minds as well as we.

W. Green. What! a blue-stocking?

Sir Wil. I see!—She'll come to calling names at last!

[*Aside.*

I should offend myself to quote the term.
But, to return, for yet I have not done;
And further yet may go, then progress on
That she was young, that she was beautiful.
A wit and learn'd are nought to what's to come—
She had a heart!—

W. Green [*who during SIR WILLIAM'S speech has turned gradually*]. What, Master Waller gone! [*Aside.*

Sir Wil. I say she had a heart—

W. Green. [*Starting up — SIR WILLIAM also.*] A plague
upon her!

Sir Wil. I knew she would break out!

[*Aside.*

W. Green. Here, take the ring.

It has ruin'd me!

Sir Wil. I vow thou hast no cause
For anger!

W. Green. Have I not? I am undone,
And all about that bauble of a ring!

Sir Wil. You're right, it is a bauble.

W. Green. And the minx
That gave it thee!

Sir Wil. You're right, she was a minx.
I knew 'twould come to calling names at last.

[*Aside.*

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove, leave me.

Sir Wil. Widow Green!—

W. Green. You have undone me, sir!

Sir Wil. Don't say so!—Don't!

It was a girl—a child that gave it me!

W. Green. Do you hear me, sir? I bade you leave me.

Sir Wil. If

I thought you were so jealous.

W. Green. Jealous, sir!

Sir William! quit my house.

Sir Wil. A little girl

To make you jealous!

W. Green. Sir, you'll drive me mad!

Sir Wil. A child, a perfect child, not ten years old!

W. Green. Sir, I would be alone, sir!

Sir Wil. Young enough

To dandle still her doll!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green!

W. Green. I hate you, sir!—Detest you!—Never wish
To see you more! You have ruin'd me!—Undone me!
A blighted life I wear, and all through you!
The fairest hopes that ever woman nourish'd
You've canker'd in the very blowing! bloom,
And sweet destroy'd, and nothing left me, but
The melancholy stem.

Sir Wil. And all about

A little slut I gave a rattle to!—

Would pester me for gingerbread and comfits!—

A little roguish feigning!—A love-trick

I play'd to prove your love!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

If of my own room you'll not suffer me

To be the mistress, I shall leave it to you!

Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green! The ring——

W. Green. Confound the ring,

The donor of it, thee, and everything! [Goes out.

Sir Wil. She is over head and ears in love with me!

She's mad with love! There's love and all its signs!

She's jealous of me unto very death!

Poor Widow Green! I warrant she is now

In tears!—I think I hear her sob!—Poor thing,

Sir William! O Sir William! You have raised

A furious tempest! Set your wits to work

To turn it to a calm. No question that

She loves me!—None, then, that she'll take me! So

I'll have the marriage settlements made out

To-morrow, and a special license got,

And marry her the next day! I shall make

Quick work of it, and take her by surprise!

Who but a widower a widow's match?

What could she see with else but partial eyes

To guess me only forty! I'm a wonder!

What shall I pass for in my wedding suit!

I vow I am a puzzle to myself,
As well as all the world besides.—Odds life!
To win the heart of buxom Widow Green! [Goes out.]

WIDOW GREEN *re-enters with* LYDIA.

W. Green. At last the dotard's gone! Fly, Lydia, fly,
This letter bear to Master Waller straight;
Quick, quick, or I'm undone! He is abused,
And I must undeceive him—own my love,
And heart and hand at his disposal lay.
Answer me not, my girl—Obey me! Fly. [Goes out.]

Lydia. Untowardly it falls!—I had resolved
This hour to tell her I must quit her service!
Go to his house! I will not disobey
Her last commands!—I'll leave it at the door,
And as it closes on me think I take
One more adieu of him!—Hard destiny! [Goes out.]

SCENE II.—*A Room in Sir William's.*

Enter CONSTANCE.

Con. The booby! He must fall in love, indeed!
And now he's nought but sentimental looks
And sentences, pronounced 'twixt breath and voice!
And attitudes of tender languishment!
Nor can I get from him the name of her
Hath turn'd him from a stock into a fool.
He hems and haws, now titters, now looks grave!
Begins to speak and halts! takes off his eyes
To fall in contemplation on a chair,
A table, or the ceiling, wall or floor!
I'll plague him worse and worse! O here he comes!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Despite her spiteful usage, I'm resolved
To tell her now. Dear neighbour Constance!

Con. Fool!
Accost me like a lady, sir! I hate
The name of neighbour!

Wild. Mistress Constance, then—
I'll call thee that.

Con. Don't call me anything!
I hate to hear thee speak—to look at thee,
To dwell in the same house with thee!

Wild. In what
Have I offended?

Con. What!—I hate an ape!

Wild. An ape!

Con. Who bade thee ape the gentleman?
And put on dress that don't belong to thee?

Go! change thee with thy whipper-in or huntsman,
And none will doubt thou wearest thy own clothes.

Wild. A pretty pass! Mock'd for the very dress
I bought to pleasure her! Untoward things
Are women! [*Aside. Walks backwards and forwards.*]

Con. Do you call that walking? Pray
What makes you twist your body so, and take
Such pains to turn your toes out? If you'd walk,
Walk thus! Walk like a man, as I do now! [*Walking.*]
Is yours the way a gentleman should walk?
You neither walk like man nor gentleman!
I'll show you how to walk. [*Mimicking him.*] Do you call that
walking?

Wild. My thanks, for a drill-serjeant twice a day
For her sake! [*Aside.*]

Con. Now, of all things in the world,
What made you dance last night?

Wild. What made me dance?

Con. Right! It was anything but dancing! Steps
That never came from dancing-school—nor English,
Nor Scotch, nor Irish! You must try to cut,
And how you did it! [*Cuts.*] That's the way to cut!
And then your *chassé*! Thus you went, and thus [*mimicking*
him],

As though you had been playing at hop, step,
And jump!—And yet you look'd so monstrous pleased,
And play'd the simpleton with such a grace,
Taking their tittering for compliment!
I could have box'd you soundly for't. Ten times
Denied I that I knew you.

Wild. Twenty guineas
Were better in the gutter thrown than gone
To fee a dancing-master! [*Aside.*]

Con. And you're grown
An amateur in music!—What fine air
Was that you praised last night?—"The Widow Jones!"
A country jig they've turn'd into a song.
You ask'd "if it had come from Italy?"
The lady blush'd, and held her peace, and then
You blush'd and said, "Perhaps it came from France!"
And then when blush'd the lady more, nor spoke,
You said, "At least it came from Germany!"
The air was English!—a true English air;
A downright English air!—a common air,
Old as "When Good King Arthur." Not a square,
Court, alley, street, or lane, about the town,
In which it is not whistled, play'd, or sung!
But you must have it come from Italy,
Or Germany, or France.—Go home! Go home!
To Lincolnshire, and mind thy dog and horn!
You'll never do for town! "The Widow Jones"
To come from Italy! Stay not in town,

Or you'll be married to the Widow Jones,
 Since you've forsworn, you say, the Widow Green!
 And morn and night they'll din your ears with her!
 "Well met, dear Master Wildrake.—A fine day!
 Pray, can you tell whence came the Widow Jones?"
 They love a jest in town!—To Lincolnshire!
 You'll never do for town!—To Lincolnshire!
 "The Widow Jones" to come from Italy! [*Goes out, laughing.*
Wild. Confound the Widow Jones! 'Tis true! The air
 Well as the huntsman's triple mort I know,
 But knew not then indeed, 'twas so disguised
 With shakes and flourishes, outlandish things,
 That mar, not grace, an honest English song!
 Howe'er, the mischief's done! and as for her,
 She is either into hate or madness fallen.
 If madness, would she had her wits again,
 Or I my heart!—If hate—My love's undone!
 I'll give her up. I'll e'en to Master Truworth,
 Confess my treason—own my punishment—
 Take horse, and back again to Lincolnshire! [*Goes out.*
Con. [*Returning.*] Not here! I trust I have not gone too far!
 If he should quit the house! go out of town!
 Poor neighbour Wildrake! Little does he owe me!
 From childhood I've been used to plague him thus.
 Why would he fall in love, and spoil it all!
 I feel as I could cry! He has no right
 To marry any one! What wants he with
 A wife? Has he not plague enough in me?
 Would he be plagued with anybody else?
 Ever since we came to live in town I have felt
 The want of neighbour Wildrake! Not a soul
 Besides I care to quarrel with; and now
 He goes and gives himself to another!—What!
 Am I in love with neighbour Wildrake?—No.
 I only would not have him marry—Marry?
 Sooner I'd have him dead than have him marry!

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Master Waller's House.*

Enter ALICE, hastily.

Alice. [*Speaking to the outside.*] Fly, Stephen, to the door!
 your rapier! quick!—
 Our master is beset, because of one
 Whose part he takes—a maid, whom lawless men
 Would lawlessly entreat! In what a world

We live! I shake from head to foot!—How well
[Looking out of window.]

He lays about him, and his other arm
 Engaged, in charge of her whom he defends—
 A damsel worth a broil!—Now Stephen, now!
 Take off the odds, brave lad, and turn the scale!
 I would I were a swordsman! How he makes
 His rapier fly! Well done!—O heaven, there's blood,
 But on the side that's wrong!—Well done, good Stephen!
 Pray Heaven no life be ta'en!—Lay on, brave lad!
 He has mark'd his man again! Good lad—Well done,
 I pray no mischief come!—Press on him, Stephen!
 Now gives he ground—Follow thy advantage up!
 Allow no pause for breath!—Hit him again!
 Forbid it end in death!—Lounge home, good Stephen!
 How fast he now retreats!—That spring, I'll swear,
 Was answer to thy point!—Well fenced!—Well fenced!
 Now Heaven forefend it end in death!—He flies!
 And from his comrade, the same moment, hath
 Our master jerk'd his sword.—The day is ours!
 Quick may they get a surgeon for their wounds,
 And I, a cordial for my flutter'd spirits:
 I vow, I'm nigh to swoon!

Wal. [without].—Hoa! Alice! Hoa!
 Open the door! Quick, Alice! Quick!

Alice. Anon!
 Young joints take little thought of agéd ones,
 But fancy them as supple as their own.

Wal. Alice!

Alice. [Opening the door.] I'm here! A mercy!—Is she dead?

Enter MASTER WALLER, bearing LYDIA, fainting.

Wal. No!—She but faints—A chair!—Quick, Alice, quick!
 Water to bathe her temples. [*ALICE goes out.*] Such a turn
 Kind fortune never did me! Shall I kiss
 To life these frozen lips?—No!—Of her plight
 'Twere base to take advantage! [*ALICE returns, &c.*] All is
 well,

The blood returns.

Alice. How wondrous fair she is!

Wal. Thou think'st her so?—No wonder then should I.
 How say you?—Wondrous fair? [*Aside.*

Alice. Yes; wondrous fair!
 Harm never come to her! So sweet a thing
 'Twere pity were abused!

Wal. You think her fair?

Alice. Ay, marry! Half so fair were more than match
 For fairest she mine eyes e'er saw before!
 And what a form! A foot and instep there!
 Vouchers of symmetry! A little foot
 And rising instep, from an ankle arching,
 A palm, and that a little one, might span.

Wal. Who taught thee thus?

Alice. Why who, but her, taught thee?
Thy mother!—Heaven rest her!—Thy good mother!
She could read men and women by their hands
And feet!—And here's a hand!—A fairy palm!
Fingers that taper to the pinky tips,
With nails of rose, like shells of such a hue,
Berimm'd with pearl, you pick upon the shore!
Save these the gloss and colour wear, without.

Wal. Why, how thou talk'st!

Alice. Did I not tell thee thus
Thy mother used to talk? Such hand and foot,
She used to say, in man or woman vouch'd
For noble nature!—Sentiment refined;
Affections tender; apprehension quick—
Degrees beyond the generality!
There is a marriage finger! Curse the hand
Would balk it of a ring!

Wal. She's quite restored.
Leave us!—Why cast'st thou that uneasy look?
Why linger'st thou? I'm not alone with her.
My honour's with her too. I would not wrong her.

Alice. And if thou wouldst, thou'rt not thy mother's son.

[Goes out.]

Wal. You are better?

Lydia. Much!—Much!

Wal. Know you him who durst
Attempt this violence, in open day?
It seem'd as he would force thee to his coach,
I saw attending.

Lydia. Take this letter, sir,
And send the answer—I must needs be gone.

Wal. [Throwing the letter away.] I read no letter! Tell
me, what of him
I saw offend thee?

Lydia. He hath often met me,
And by design I think, upon the street;
And tried to win mine ear, which ne'er he got
Except by bold enforcement. Presents—gifts—
Of jewels and of gold to wild amount,
To win an audience, hath he proffer'd me;
Until, methought, my silence—for my lips
Disdain'd reply where question was a wrong—
Had wearied him. O, sir! whate'er of life
Remains to me I had foregone, ere proved
The horror of this hour!—And you it is
That have protected me!

Wal. O speak not on't!

Lydia. You that have saved me from mine enemy!

Wal. I pray you to forget it.

Lydia. From a foe
More dire than he that threatens life with peril!

Wal. Sweet Lydia, I beseech you spare me!

Lydia. No!

I will not spare you.—You have succour'd me,
You whom I fear worse than that baleful foe. *[Rises to go.]*

Wal. *[Kneeling and snatching her hand.]* Lydia!

Lydia. Now, make thy bounty perfect. Drop
My hand. That posture which dishonours thee,
Quit!—for 'tis shame on shame to show respect
Where you design disgrace. Throw ope thy gate
And let me pass, and never seek with me,
By look, or speech, or aught, communion more!

Wal. Thou saidst thou lovedst me?

Lydia. Yes!—when I believed
My tongue was bidding thee its last adieu;
And now that I am sure it bids it thee—
For never must we speech exchange again—
Again, I tell it thee! Release me, sir!
Rise!—and no hindrance to my will oppose!
I *must* be free to go.

Wal. I cannot lose thee!

Lydia. Thou canst not have me!

Wal. No!

Lydia. Thou canst not. I
Repeat it.—Yet I'm thine—thine every way,
Except where honour fences!—Honour, sir,
Not property of gentle blood alone;
Of gentle blood not always property!
Thou'lt not obey me? Thou wouldst still detain me!
O what a contradiction is a man!
What in another he one moment spurns,
The next—he does, himself, complacently!

Wal. Wouldst have me lose the hand that holds my life?

Lydia. Hear me and keep it, if thou art a man!
I love thee—for thy benefit would give
The labour of that hand!—wear out my feet!—
Rack the invention of my mind!—the feeling
Of my heart in one volition concentrate!
My life expend, and think I paid no more
Than he who wins a priceless gem for thanks!
For such good-will canst thou return me wrong?

Wal. Yet, for a while, I cannot let thee go.
Propound for me an oath, that I'll not wrong thee—
An oath, which, if I break it, will entail
Forfeit of earth and heaven. I'll take it—so
Thou stay'st one hour with me!

Lydia. No!—Not one moment!
Unhand me, or I shriek!—I know the summons
Will pierce into the street, and set me free!
I stand in peril while I'm near thee! She
Who knows her danger, and delays escape,
Hath but herself to thank, whate'er befalls!
Sir, I may have a woman's weakness, but

I have a woman's resolution, too,
And that's a woman's strength! One moment more!—

Wal. Lo! Thou art free to go!

*[Rises, and throws himself distractedly into a chair.
LYDIA approaches the door—her pace slackens—she
pauses with her hand upon the lock—turns, and looks
earnestly on WALLER.]*

Lydia. I have a word
To say to thee; if, by thy mother's honour,
Thou swear'st to me thou wilt not quit thy seat.

Wal. Yea! by my mother's honour.

Lydia. *[After a pause, bursting into tears.]* Why, O why—
Why have you used me thus? See what you have done!
Essay'd to light a guilty passion up,
And kindled in its stead a holy one!
For I do love thee! Know'st thou not the wish
To find desert will bring it oft to sight
Where yet it is not? so, for substance, passes
What only is a phantasm of the mind!
I fear'd thy love was guilty—yet my wish
To find it honest, stronger than my fear,
My fear with fatal triumph overthrew!
Now hope and fear give up to certainty,
And I must fly thee—yet must love thee still!

Wal. Lydia! by all—

Lydia. I pray you hear me out!
Was it right? was it generous? was it pitiful?
One way or other I might be undone:
To love with sin—or love without a hope!

Wal. Yet hear me, Lydia!—

Lydia. Stop! I am undone!
A maid without a heart—robb'd of the soil,
Wherein life's hopes and wishes root and spring,
And thou the foe that did me so much wrong,
And vow'd me so much love!—But I forgive thee!
Yea, and I do bless thee! *[Rushing up and sinking at his feet.]*
Recollect thy oath!—
Or in thy heart lodged never germ of honour,
But 'tis a desert all!

*[She kisses his hand—presses it to her heart, and
kisses it again.]*

And now farewell to thee!
Mayst thou be happy!

*[Rises.
Going.]*

Wal. Wouldst insure the thing
Thou wishest?

*[She moves towards the door with a gesture that pro-
hibits further converse.]*

Stop!
O sternly resolute!

*[She continues to move on.
[She still moves.]*

I mean thee honour!

[She stops and turns towards him.]

Thou dost meditate—

I know it—flight. Give me some pause for thought,

But to confirm a mind almost made up.
 If in an hour thou hear'st not from me, then
 Think me a friend far better lost than won!
 Wilt thou do this?

Lydia. I will.

Wal. An hour decides.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in Sir William Fondlove's House.*

Enter WILDRAKE and TRUEWORTH.

Wild. You are not angry?

True. No; I knew the service
 I sent you on was one of danger.

Wild. Thank you.

Most kind you are—And you believe she loves me:
 And your own hopes give up to favour mine.
 Was ever known such kindness! Much I fear
 'Twill cost you.

True. Never mind! I'll try and bear it.

Wild. That's right. No use in yielding to a thing
 Resolve does wonders! Shun the sight of her—
 See other women!—Fifty to be found
 As fair as she.

True. I doubt it.

Wild. Doubt it not.

Doubt nothing that gives promise of a cure.
 Right handsome dames there are in Lancashire,
 Whence call'd their women, witches!—witching things!
 I know a dozen families in which
 You'd meet a courtesy worthy of a bow.
 I'll give you letters to them.

True. Will you?

Wild. Yes.

True. The worth of a disinterested friend!

Wild. O Master Truworth, deeply I'm your debtor
 I own I die for love of neighbour Constance!
 And thou to give her up for me! Kind friend!
 What won't I do for thee?—Don't pine to death!
 I'll find thee fifty ways to cure thy passion,
 And make thee heart-whole, if thou'rt so resolved.
 Thou shalt be master of my sporting stud,
 And go a hunting. If that likes thee not,
 Take up thy quarters at my shooting lodge;
 There is a cellar to't—make free with it.
 I'll thank thee if thou emptiest it. The song
 Gives out that wine feeds love—It drowns it, man!
 If thou wilt neither hunt nor shoot, try games;
 Play at loggats, bowls, fives, dominoes, draughts, cribbage,
 Backgammon—special recipes for love!
 And you believe, for all the hate she shows,
 That neighbour Constance loves me?

True. 'Tis my thought.

Wild. How shall I find it out?

True. Affect to love

Another. Say your passion thrives; the day
Is fix'd; and pray her undertake the part
Of bridemaids to your bride. 'Twill bring her out.

Wild. You think she'll own her passion?

True. If she loves.

Wild. I thank thee! I shall try it! Master Truworth,
What shall I say to thee, to give her up,
And love her so?

True. Say nothing.

Wild. Noble friend!

Kind friend! Instruct another man the way
To win thy mistress! Thou'lt not break my heart?
Take my advice, thou shalt not be in love
A month! Frequent the play-house!—Walk the Park!
I'll think of fifty ladies that I know,
Yet can't remember now—enchanted ones!
And then there's Lancashire!—and I have friends
In Berkshire and in Wiltshire, that have swarms
Of daughters! Then my shooting-lodge and stud!
I'll cure thee in a fortnight of thy love!
And now to neighbour Constance—yet almost
I fear accosting her—a hundred times
Have I essay'd to break my mind to her,
But still she stops my mouth with restless scorn!
Howe'er, thy scheme I'll try, and may it thrive!
For I am sick for love of neighbour Constance.
Farewell, dear Master Truworth! Take my counsel—
Conquer thy passion! Do so! Be a man! [*Goes out.*
True. Feat, easy done, that does not tax ourselves!

Enter PHOEBE.

Phoebe. A letter, sir.

[*Goes out.*

True. Good sooth, a roaming one,
And yet slow traveller. This should have reach'd me
In Lombardy.—The hand! Give way, weak seal,
Thy feeble let too strong for my impatience!
Ha! Wrong'd!—Let me contain myself!—Compell'd
To fly the roof that gave her birth!—My sister!
No partner in her flight but her pure honour!
I am again a brother.—Pillow, board,
I know not till I find her.

Enter WALLER.

Wal. Master Truworth!

True. Ha! Master Waller! Welcome, Master Waller.

Wal. Good Master Truworth, thank you. Finding you
From home, I e'en made bold to follow you,
For I esteem you as a man, and fain
Would benefit by your kind offices.

But let me tell you first, to your reproof,
I am indebted more than e'er I was
To praise of any other! I am come, sir,
To give you evidence I am not one
Who owns advice is right, and acts not on't.

True. Pray you explain.

Wal. Will you the bearer be
Of this to one, has cause to thank you, too;
Though I the larger debtor?—Read it, sir.

True. [*Reading the letter.*] “At morn to-morrow I shall
make you mine;

Will you accept from me the name of wife,
The name of husband give me in exchange?”

Wal. How say you, sir?

True. 'Tis boldly—nobly done!

Wal. If she consents—which affectation 'twere
To say I doubt—bid her prepare for church,
And you shall act the father, sir, to her
You did the brother by.

True. Right willingly.

Though matter of high moment I defer,
Mind, heart, and soul, are all enlisted in!

Wal. May I implore you, haste! A time is set!—
How light an act of duty makes the heart!

[*They go out together.*]

SCENE III.—*Another Chamber in Sir William's House.*

CONSTANCE *discovered.*

Con. I'll pine to death for no man! Wise it were,
Indeed, to die for neighbour Wildrake—No!—
I know the duty of a woman, better—
What fits a maid of spirit! I am out
Of patience with myself, to cast a thought
Away upon him. Hang him! Lovers cost
Nought but the pains of luring. I'll get fifty,
And break the heart of every one of them!
I will! I'll be the champion of my sex,
And take revenge on shallow, fickle man,
Who gives his heart to fools, and slights the worth
Of proper women! I suppose she's handsome!
My face 'gainst hers, at hazard of mine eyes!
A maid of mind! I'll talk her to a stand,
Or tie my tongue for life! A maid of soul!—
An artful, managing, dissembling one,
Or she had never caught him!—He's no man
To fall in love himself, or long ago,
I warrant he had fall'n in love with me!
I hate the fool!—I do! Ha, here he comes.
What brings him hither?—Let me dry my eyes;

True. 'Tis my thought.

Wild. How shall I find it out?

True. Affect to love

Another. Say your passion thrives; the day
Is fix'd; and pray her undertake the part
Of bridemaids to your bride. 'Twill bring her out.

Wild. You think she'll own her passion?

True. If she loves.

Wild. I thank thee! I shall try it! Master Truworth,
What shall I say to thee, to give her up,
And love her so?

True. Say nothing.

Wild. Noble friend!

Kind friend! Instruct another man the way
To win thy mistress! Thou'lt not break my heart?
Take my advice, thou shalt not be in love
A month! Frequent the play-house!—Walk the Park!
I'll think of fifty ladies that I know,
Yet can't remember now—enchancing ones!
And then there's Lancashire!—and I have friends
In Berkshire and in Wiltshire, that have swarms
Of daughters! Then my shooting-lodge and stud!
I'll cure thee in a fortnight of thy love!
And now to neighbour Constance—yet almost
I fear accosting her—a hundred times
Have I essay'd to break my mind to her,
But still she stops my mouth with restless scorn!
Howe'er, thy scheme I'll try, and may it thrive!
For I am sick for love of neighbour Constance.
Farewell, dear Master Truworth! Take my counsel—
Conquer thy passion! Do so! Be a man! [*Goes out.*
True. Feat, easy done, that does not tax ourselves!

Enter PHOEBE.

Phoebe. A letter, sir.

[*Goes out.*

True. Good sooth, a roaming one,
And yet slow traveller. This should have reach'd me
In Lombardy.—The hand! Give way, weak seal,
Thy feeble let too strong for my impatience!
Ha! Wrong'd!—Let me contain myself!—Compell'd
To fly the roof that gave her birth!—My sister!
No partner in her flight but her pure honour!
I am again a brother.—Pillow, board,
I know not till I find her.

Enter WALLER.

Wal. Master Truworth!

True. Ha! Master Waller! Welcome, Master Waller.

Wal. Good Master Truworth, thank you. Finding you
From home, I e'en made bold to follow you,
For I esteem you as a man, and fain
Would benefit by your kind offices.

But let me tell you first, to your reproof,
I am indebted more than e'er I was
To praise of any other! I am come, sir,
To give you evidence I am not one
Who owns advice is right, and acts not on't.

True. Pray you explain.

Wal. Will you the bearer be
Of this to one, has cause to thank you, too;
Though I the larger debtor?—Read it, sir.

True. [*Reading the letter.*] “At morn to-morrow I shall
make you mine;

Will you accept from me the name of wife,
The name of husband give me in exchange?”

Wal. How say you, sir?

True. 'Tis boldly—nobly done!

Wal. If she consents—which affectation 'twere
To say I doubt—bid her prepare for church,
And you shall act the father, sir, to her
You did the brother by.

True. Right willingly.

Though matter of high moment I defer,
Mind, heart, and soul, are all enlisted in!

Wal. May I implore you, haste! A time is set!—
How light an act of duty makes the heart!

[*They go out together.*]

SCENE III.—*Another Chamber in Sir William's House.*

CONSTANCE *discovered.*

Con. I'll pine to death for no man! Wise it were,
Indeed, to die for neighbour Wildrake—No!—
I know the duty of a woman, better—
What fits a maid of spirit! I am out
Of patience with myself, to cast a thought
Away upon him. Hang him! Lovers cost
Nought but the pains of luring. I'll get fifty,
And break the heart of every one of them!
I will! I'll be the champion of my sex,
And take revenge on shallow, fickle man,
Who gives his heart to fools, and slights the worth
Of proper women! I suppose she's handsome!
My face 'gainst hers, at hazard of mine eyes!
A maid of mind! I'll talk her to a stand,
Or tie my tongue for life! A maid of soul!—
An artful, managing, dissembling one,
Or she had never caught him!—He's no man
To fall in love himself, or long ago,
I warrant he had fall'n in love with me!
I hate the fool!—I do! Ha, here he comes.
What brings him hither?—Let me dry my eyes;

He must not see I have been crying. Hang him,
I have much to do, indeed, to cry for him!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Your servant, neighbour Constance.

Con. Servant, sir!

Now what, I wonder, comes the fool to say,
Makes him look so important?

Wild. Neighbour Constance,
I am a happy man.

Con. What makes you so?

Wild. A thriving suit.

Con. In Chancery?

Wild. O no!

In love.

Con. O, true! You are in love! Go on!

Wild. Well, as I said, my suit's a thriving one.

Con. You mean you are beloved again!—I don't
Believe it.

Wild. I can give you proof.

Con. What proof?

Love-letters? She's a shameless maid
To write them! Can she spell? Ay, I suppose
With prompting of a dictionary!

Wild. Nay

Without one.

Con. I will lay you ten to one

She cannot spell! How know you she can spell?

You cannot spell yourself! You write command

With a single M—C—O—M—A—N—D:

Yours to Co-mand.

Wild. I did not say she wrote
Love-letters to me.

Con. Then she suffers you to press
Her hand, perhaps?

Wild. She does.

Con. Does she press yours?

Wild. She does.—It goes on swimmingly!

[*Aside.*

Con. She does!

She is no modest woman! I'll be bound,
Your arm the madam suffers round her waist?

Wild. She does!

Con. She does! Outrageous forwardness!
Does she let you kiss her?

Wild. Yes.

Con. She should be——

Wild. What?

Con. What you got thrice your share of when at school,
And yet not half your due! A brazen face!
More could not grant a maid about to wed.

Wild. She is so.

Con. What?

Wild. How swimmingly it goes ! [*Aside.*

Con. [*With suppressed impatience.*] Are you about to marry, neighbour Wildrake ?

Are you about to marry ?

Wild. Excellent.

Con. [*Breaking out.*] Why don't you answer me ?

Wild. I am.

Con. You are—

I tell you what, sir—You're a fool !

Wild. For what ?

Con. You are not fit to marry. Do not know
Enough of the world, sir ! Have no more experience,
Thought, judgment, than a schoolboy ! Have no mind
Of your own !—Your wife will make a fool of you,
Will jilt you, break your heart ! I wish she may,
I do ! You have no more business with a wife
Than I have ! Do you mean to say, indeed,
You are about to marry ?

Wild. Yes, indeed.

Con. And when ?

Wild. I'll say to-morrow !

Con. When, I say ?

Wild. To-morrow.

Con. Thank you ! much beholden to you !
You've told me on't in time ! I'm very much
Beholden to you, neighbour Wildrake ! And,
I pray you, at what hour ?

Wild. That we have left
For you to name.

Con. For me !

Wild. For you.

Con. Indeed !

You're very bountiful ! I should not wonder
Meant you I should be bridemaids to the lady !

Wild. 'Tis just the thing I mean !

Con. [*Furiously.*] The thing you mean !
Now pray you, neighbour, tell me that again,
And think before you speak ; for much I doubt
You know what you are saying. Do you mean
To ask me to be bridemaids ?

Wild. Even so.

Con. Bridemaids ?

Wild. Ay, bridemaids !—It is coming fast
Unto a head.

Con. And 'tis for me you wait
To fix the day ? It shall be doomsday then !

Wild. Be doomsday ?

Con. Doomsday !

Wild. Wherefore doomsday ?

Con. Wherefore !—

Go ask your bride, and give her that for me.
Look, neighbour Wildrake ! you may think this strange,

[*Boxes him*

[*Aside.*

But don't misconstrue it! For you are vain, sir!
 And may put down, for love, what comes from hate.
 I should not wonder, thought you I was jealous;
 But I'm not jealous, sir!—would scorn to be so
 Where it was worth my while—I pray henceforth
 We may be strangers, sir!—you will oblige me
 By going out of town. I should not like
 To meet you on the street, sir. Marry, sir!
 Marry to-day! The sooner, sir, the better!
 And may you find you have made a bargain, sir.
 As for the lady!—much I wish her joy.
 I pray you send no bride-cake, sir, to me!
 Nor gloves—If you do, I'll give them to my maid!
 Or throw them into the kennel—or the fire.
 I am your most obedient servant, sir!

Wild. She is a riddle, solve her he who can!

[*Goes out.*

[*Goes out.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Sir William Fondlove's.*

SIR WILLIAM seated with two Lawyers.

Sir Wil. How many words you take to tell few things,
 Again, again say over what, said once,
 Methinks were told enough!

First Lawyer. It is the law,
 Which labours at precision.

Sir Wil. Yes; and thrives
 Upon uncertainty—and makes it, too,
 With all its pains to shun it. I could bind
 Myself, methinks, with but the twentieth part
 Of all this cordage, sirs.—But every man,
 As they say, to his own business. You think
 The settlement is handsome?

First Lawyer. Very, sir.

Sir Wil. Then now, sirs, we have done, and take my thanks,
 Which, with your charges, I shall render you
 Again to-morrow.

First Lawyer. Happy nuptials, sir! [Lawyers go out.]

Sir Wil. Who passes there? Hoa! send my daughter to me,
 And Master Wildrake too! I wait for them.
 Bold work!—Without her leave to get the license,
 Prepare the clergyman and wait upon her
 To carry her to church!—'Tis taking her
 By storm! What else could move her yesterday
 But jealousy? What causes jealousy

But love? She's mine the moment she receives
Conclusive proof, like this, that heart and soul,
And mind and person, I am all her own!
Heigh ho! These soft alarms are very sweet,
Yet tantalizing too! Ha! Master Wildrake,

Enter WILDRAKE.

I am glad you're ready, for I'm all in arms
To bear the widow off. Come! Don't be sad;
All must go merrily, you know, to-day!—
She still makes jest of him, I see! The girl
Affects him not, and Truworth is at fault,
Though clear it is that he is dying for her.
Well, daughter?—So I see you're ready too.

[*Aside.*

Enter CONSTANCE.

Why, what's amiss with thee?

Phæbe. [Entering.] The coach is here.

Sir Wil. Come, Wildrake, offer her your arm.

Con. [To WILDRAKE.] I thank you!

I am not an invalid!—can use my limbs!
He knows not how to make an arm, befits
A lady lean upon.

Sir Wil. Why, teach him then.

Con. Teach him! Teach Master Wildrake! Teach indeed!
I taught my dog to beg, because I knew
That he could learn it.

Sir Wil. Peace, thou little shrew!
I'll have no wrangling on my wedding-day!
Here, take my arm.

Con. I'll not!—I'll walk to the coach!
Alone live, die alone! I do execrate
The fool and all his sex!

Sir Wil. Again!

Con. I have done.
When do you marry, Master Wildrake? She
Will want a spouse, who goes to church with thee!

[*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*Widow Green's Dressing-room.*

WIDOW GREEN *discovered at her Toilet, attended by AMELIA,*
WALLER'S Letter to LYDIA in her hand.

W. Green. O bond of destiny!—Fair bond, that seal'st
My fate in happiness!—I'll read thee yet
Again—although thou'rt written on my heart.
But here he laid his hand, inditing thee!
And this the tracing of his fingers! So
I read thee, that could rhyme thee, as my prayers!

"At morn to-morrow I will make you mine.
 Will you accept from me the name of wife—
 The name of husband give me in exchange?"
 The traitress! to break ope my billet-doux,
 And take the envelope!—But I forgive her,
 Seeing she left the rich contents behind!
 Amelia, give this feather more a slope,
 That it sit droopingly. I would look all
 Dissolvment, nought about me to bespeak
 Boldness! I would appear a timid bride,
 Trembling upon the verge of wifhood, as
 I ne'er before had stood there! That will do.
 O dear!—How agitated am I—Don't
 I look so? I have found a secret out,—
 Nothing in women strikes a man so much
 As to look interesting! Hang this cheek
 Of mine! 'Tis too saucy; what a pity
 To have a colour of one's own!—Amelia!
 Could you contrive, dear girl, to bleach my cheek,
 How I would thank you! I could give it then
 What tint I chose, and that should be the hectic
 Which speaks a heart in delicate commotion!
 I am much too florid! Stick a rose in my hair,
 The brightest you can find, 'twill help, my girl,
 Subdue my rebel colour—Nay, the rose
 Loses complexion, not my cheek! Exchange it
 For a carnation. That's the flower, Amelia!
 You clearly see it triumphs o'er my cheek.
 Are you content with me?

Amelia. I am, my lady.

W. Green. And whither, think you, has the hussy gone,
 Whose place you fill so well?—Into the country?
 Or fancy you she stops in town?

Amelia. I can't
 Conjecture.

W. Green. Shame upon her!—Leave her place
 Without a moment's warning!—with a man too!
 Seem'd he a gentleman that took her hence?

Amelia. He did.

W. Green. You never saw him here before?

Amelia. Never.

W. Green. Not lounging on the other side
 Of the street, and reconnoitering the windows?

Amelia. Never.

W. Green. 'Twas plann'd by letter. Notes, you know,
 Have often come to her—But I forgive her,
 Since this advice she chanced to leave behind
 Of gentle Master Waller's wishes, which
 I bless myself in blessing!—Gods, a knock!
 'Tis he! Show in those friends who are so kind
 To act my bridemaids for me on this brief
 And agitating notice! [*AMELIA goes out.*] Yes, I look

A bride sufficiently ! And this the hand
 That gives away my liberty again !
 Upon my life it is a pretty hand,
 A delicate and sentimental hand !
 No lotion equals gloves ; no woman knows
 The use of them that does not sleep in them !
 My neck hath kept its colour wondrously !
 Well ; after all it is no miracle
 That I should win the heart of a young man.
 My bridesmaids come !—O dear !

Enter two Ladies.

First Lady. How do you, love ? A kind good morning to
 you ! Little dear,
 How much you are affected ! Why we thought
 You ne'er would summon us.

W. Green. One takes, you know,
 When one is flurried, twice the time to dress.
 My dears, has either of you salts ? I thank you !
 They are excellent ; the virtue's gone from mine,
 Nor thought I of renewing them.—Indeed,
 I'm unprovided, quite, for this affair.

First Lady. I think the bridegroom's come !

W. Green. Don't say so ! How
 You've made my heart jump !

First Lady. As you sent for us,
 A new-launch'd carriage drove up to the door ;
 The servants all in favours.

W. Green. 'Pon my life,
 I never shall get through it ; lend me your hand.

[*Half rises, and throws herself back on her chair again.*
 I must sit down again ! There came just now
 A feeling like to swooning over me.
 I am sure before 'tis over I shall make
 A fool of myself ! I vow I thought not half
 So much of my first wedding-day ! I'll make
 An effort ! Let me lean upon your arm,
 And give me yours, my dear. Amelia, mind
 Keep near me with the smelling-bottle.

Servant. [*Entering.*] Madam,
 The bridegroom's come.

[*Goes out.*

W. Green. The brute has knock'd me down !
 To bolt it out so ! I had started less
 If he had fired a cannon at my ear.
 How shall I ever manage to hold up
 Till all is done ! I shake from head to foot !
 You can excuse me, can't you ?—Pity me !
 One may feel queer upon one's wedding-day.

[*They go out.*

SCENE THE LAST.—*A Drawing-room.*

Enter Servants, showing in SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE, CONSTANCE, and MASTER WILDRAKE—Servants go out again.

Sir Wil. [*Aside to WILDRAKE.*] Good Master Wildrake, look more cheerfully!—Come, You do not honour to my wedding-day! How brisk am I! My body moves on springs! My stature gives no inch I throw away; My supple joints play free and sportfully; I'm every atom what a man should be.

Wild. I pray you pardon me, Sir William!

Sir Wil. Smile then, And talk and rally me! Why, I expected, Ere half an hour had pass'd, you would have put me A dozen times to the blush. Without such things, A bridegroom knows not his own wedding-day! I see! Her looks are glossary to thine! She flouts thee still, I marvel not at thee; There's thunder in that cloud! I would to-day It would disperse, and gather in the morning. I fear me much thou know'st not how to woo. I'll give thee a lesson. Ever there's a way, But knows one how to take it? Twenty men Have courted Widow Green. Who has her now? I sent to advertise her that to-day I meant to marry her. She wouldn't open My note. And gave I up? I took the way To make her love me! Straight I sent, again, To pray her leave my daughter should be bridemaid. That letter too came back. Did I give up? I took the way to make her love me! Yet, Again, I sent to ask what church she chose To marry at; my note came back again; And did I yet give up? I took the way To make her love me. All the while I found She was preparing for the wedding. Take A hint from me! She comes! My fluttering heart Gives note the empress of its realms is near. Now, Master Wildrake, mark and learn from me How it behoves a bridegroom play his part.

Enter WIDOW GREEN, supported by her Bridemaids, and followed by AMELIA.

W. Green. I cannot raise my eyes—they cannot bear The beams of his, which, like the sun's, I feel Are on me, though I see them not, enlightening The heaven of his young face; nor dare I scan The brightness of his form, which symmetry

And youth and beauty, in enriching, vie.
He kneels to me! Now grows my breathing thick,
As though about to hear a seraph's voice,
Too rich for mortal ear!

Sir Wil. My gentle bride!

W. Green. Who's that?—who speaks to me?

Sir Wil. These transports check.

Lo, an example to mankind I set
Of amorous emprise; and who should thrive,
In love, if not Love's soldier, who still presses
The doubtful siege, and will not own repulse?
Lo! here I tender thee my fealty,
To live thy duteous slave. My queen thou art,
In frowns or smiles, to give me life or death.
Oh, deign look down upon me! In thy face
Alone I look on day! It is my sun
Most bright; the which denied, all is night.
Shine out upon me, my divinity!

My gentle Widow Green!—My wife to be!—

My love, my life, my drooping, blushing bride!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove, you're a fool!

Sir Wil. A fool!

W. Green. Why come you hither, sir, in trim like this?
Or rather why at all?

Sir Wil. Why come I hither?

To marry thee!

W. Green. The man will drive me mad!
Sir William Fondlove, I'm but forty, sir,
And you are sixty, seventy, if a day;
At least you look it, sir. I marry you!
When did a woman wed her grandfather?

Sir Wil. Her brain is turn'd!

W. Green. You're in your dotage, sir,
And yet a boy in vanity! But know
Yourself from me: you are old and ugly, sir.

Sir Wil. Do you deny you are in love with me?

W. Green. In love with thee!

Sir Wil. That you are jealous of me?

W. Green. Jealous!

Sir Wil. To very lunacy!

W. Green. To hear him!

Sir Wil. Do you forget what happen'd yesterday?

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!—

Sir Wil. Widow Green, fair play!—

Are you not laughing? Is it not a jest;
Do you believe me seventy to a day?
Do I look it? Am I old and ugly? Why,
Why do I see those favours in the hall,
These ladies dress'd as bridemaids, thee as bride,
Unless to marry me?

[Knock]

W. Green. He is coming, sir,
Shall answer you for me!

Enter WALLER, with Gentlemen as Bridemen.

Wal. Where is she? What!
All that bespeaks the day, except the fair
That's queen of it? Most kind of you to grace
My nuptials so! But that I render you
My thanks in full, make full my happiness,
And tell me where's my bride?

W. Green. She's here.

Wal. Where?

W. Green. Here,
Fair Master Waller!

Wal. Lady, do not mock me!

W. Green. Mock thee! My heart is stranger to such mood,
'Tis serious tenderness and duty all.

I pray you mock not me, sir, for I do strive
With fears and soft emotions that require
Support. Take not away my little strength,
And leave me at the mercy of a feather.
I am thy bride! If 'tis thy happiness
To think me so, believe it, and be rich
To thy most boundless wishes! Master Waller,
I am thy waiting bride, the Widow Green!

Wal. Lady, no widow is the bride I seek,
But one the church has never given yet
The nuptial blessing to!

W. Green. What mean you, sir?
Why come a bridegroom here, if not to me
You sued to be your bride? Is this your hand, sir?

[Showing letter.]

Wal. It is! address'd to your fair waiting-maid.

W. Green. My waiting-maid! The laugh is passing round,
And now the turn is yours, sir. She is gone!—
Eloped!—run off!—and with the gentleman
That brought your billet-doux.

Wal. Is Truworth false?
He must be false! What madness tempted me
To trust him with such audience as I knew
Must sense, and mind, and soul of man entrance,
And leave him but the power to own its spell!
Of his own lesson he would profit take,
And plead at once an honourable love,
Supplanting mine, less pure, reform'd too late!
And if he did, what merit I, except
To lose the maid I would have wrongly won;
And, had I rightly prized her, now had worn?
I get but my deservings!

*Enter TRUEWORTH, leading in LYDIA, richly dressed, and veiled
from head to foot.*

Master Truworth,
Though for thy treachery thou hast excuse,

Thou must account for it ; so much I lose !
 Sir, you have wrong'd me to amount beyond
 Acres, and gold ;—and life, which makes them rich !
 And compensation I demand of you,
 Such as a man expects, and none but one
 That's less than man refuses ! Where's the maid
 Thou, falsely, hast abducted ?

True. I took her hence,
 But not by guile, nor yet enforcement, sir ;
 But of her free will, knowing what she did.
 That, as I found, I cannot give her back,
 I own ! Her state is changed ; but in her place
 This maid I offer you, her image far
 As feature, form, complexion, nature go !
 Resemblance halting, only there, where thou
 Thyself didst pause,—condition ; for this maid
 Is gently born and generously bred.
 Lo ! for your fair loss, fair equivalent !

Wal. Show me another sun, another earth
 I can inherit, as this Sun and Earth !
 The maid herself restore, as hence she went—
 The world can't find me her equivalent.
 Give back ! herself, her sole equivalent !

True. Her sole equivalent I offer you !
 My sister, sir, long counted lost, now found ;
 Who fled her home unwelcome bands to 'scape,
 Which a half-father would have forced upon her,
 Taking advantage of her brother's absence
 Away on travel in a distant land.
 Return'd, I miss'd her ; of the cause received
 Invention, coward, false and criminating !
 And gave her up for lost ; but happily
 Lit on her, yesterday—Behold her, sir !

[Removes veil.]

Wal. Lydia !

W. Green. My waiting-maid !

Wal. Thy sister, Truworth !

Art thou fit brother to this virtuous maid ?

True. [Giving LYDIA to WALLER.] Let this assure thee.

Lydia. [To WIDOW GREEN.] Madam, pardon me
 My double character, for honesty,
 No other end, assumed—and my concealment
 Of Master Waller's love. In all things else
 I trust I may believe you hold me blameless ;
 At least, I'll say for you, I should be so,
 For it was pastime, madam, not a task,
 To wait upon you ! Little you exacted,
 And ever made the most of what I did
 In mere obedience to you !

W. Green. Give me your hand ;
 No love without a little roguery.
 If well you play the mistress as the maid,
 You will bear off the bell ! There never was

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Unless to marry me?

[*Knock*]

W. Green. He is coming, sir,
Shall answer you for me!

Enter WALLER, with Gentlemen as Bridemen.

Wal. Where is she? What!
All that bespeaks the day, except the fair
That's queen of it? Most kind of you to grace
My nuptials so! But that I render you
My thanks in full, make full my happiness,
And tell me where's my bride?

W. Green. She's here.

Wal. Where?

W. Green. Here,
Fair Master Waller!

Wal. Lady, do not mock me!

W. Green. Mock thee! My heart is stranger to such mood,
'Tis serious tenderness and duty all.

I pray you mock not me, sir, for I do strive
With fears and soft emotions that require
Support. Take not away my little strength,
And leave me at the mercy of a feather.
I am thy bride! If 'tis thy happiness
To think me so, believe it, and be rich
To thy most boundless wishes! Master Waller,
I am thy waiting bride, the Widow Green!

Wal. Lady, no widow is the bride I seek,
But one the church has never given yet
The nuptial blessing to!

W. Green. What mean you, sir?
Why come a bridegroom here, if not to me
You sued to be your bride? Is this your hand, sir?

[Showing letter.]

Wal. It is! address'd to your fair waiting-maid.

W. Green. My waiting-maid! The laugh is passing round,
And now the turn is yours, sir. She is gone!—
Eloped!—run off!—and with the gentleman
That brought your billet-doux.

Wal. Is Truworth false?
He must be false! What madness tempted me
To trust him with such audience as I knew
Must sense, and mind, and soul of man entrance,
And leave him but the power to own its spell!
Of his own lesson he would profit take,
And plead at once an honourable love,
Supplanting mine, less pure, reform'd too late!
And if he did, what merit I, except
To lose the maid I would have wrongly won;
And, had I rightly prized her, now had worn?
I get but my deservings!

*Enter TRUEWORTH, leading in LYDIA, richly dressed, and veiled
from head to foot.*

Master Truworth,
Though for thy treachery thou hast excuse,

Thou must account for it ; so much I lose !
 Sir, you have wrong'd me to amount beyond
 Acres, and gold ;—and life, which makes them rich !
 And compensation I demand of you,
 Such as a man expects, and none but one
 That's less than man refuses ! Where's the maid
 Thou, falsely, hast abducted ?

True. I took her hence,
 But not by guile, nor yet enforcement, sir ;
 But of her free will, knowing what she did.
 That, as I found, I cannot give her back,
 I own ! Her state is changed ; but in her place
 This maid I offer you, her image far
 As feature, form, complexion, nature go !
 Resemblance halting, only there, where thou
 Thyself didst pause,—condition ; for this maid
 Is gently born and generously bred.
 Lo ! for your fair loss, fair equivalent !

Wal. Show me another sun, another earth
 I can inherit, as this Sun and Earth !
 The maid herself restore, as hence she went—
 The world can't find me her equivalent.
 Give back ! herself, her sole equivalent !

True. Her sole equivalent I offer you !
 My sister, sir, long counted lost, now found ;
 Who fled her home unwelcome bands to 'scape,
 Which a half-father would have forced upon her,
 Taking advantage of her brother's absence
 Away on travel in a distant land.
 Return'd, I miss'd her ; of the cause received
 Invention, coward, false and criminating !
 And gave her up for lost ; but happily
 Lit on her, yesterday—Behold her, sir !

[Removes veil.]

Wal. Lydia !

W. Green. My waiting-maid !

Wal. Thy sister, Truworth !

Art thou fit brother to this virtuous maid ?

True. [Giving LYDIA to WALLER.] Let this assure thee.

Lydia. [To WIDOW GREEN.] Madam, pardon me
 My double character, for honesty,
 No other end, assumed—and my concealment
 Of Master Waller's love. In all things else
 I trust I may believe you hold me blameless ;
 At least, I'll say for you, I should be so,
 For it was pastime, madam, not a task,
 To wait upon you ! Little you exacted,
 And ever made the most of what I did
 In mere obedience to you !

W. Green. Give me your hand ;
 No love without a little roguery.
 If well you play the mistress as the maid,
 You will bear off the bell ! There never was

A better girl!—I have made myself a fool.
 I am undone, if goes the news abroad.
 I donn'd my wedding dress for no effect
 Except to put it off! I must be married.
 I'm a lost woman, if another day
 I go without a husband!—What a sight
 He looks by Master Waller!—Yet he is physie
 I die without, so needs must gulp it down.
 I'll swallow him with what good grace I can—
 Sir William Fondlove!

Sir Wil. Widow Green!

W. Green. I own

I have been rude to you. Thou dost not look
 So old by thirty, forty, years as now
 I said. Thou'rt far from ugly—very far!
 And as I said, Sir William, once before,
 Thou art a kind and right good-humour'd man:
 I was but angry with you! Why, I'll tell you
 At more convenient season—and you know
 An angry woman heeds not what she says,
 And will say anything!

Sir Wil. I were unworthy
 The name of man, if an apology,
 So gracious, came off profitless, and from
 A lady! Will you take me, Widow Green?

W. Green. Hem!

True. [To WILDRAKE.] Master Wildrake dress'd to go to
 church! [Curties.]

She has acknowledged, then, she loves thee?—No?
 Give me thy hand, I'll lead thee up to her.

Wild. 'Sdeath! what are you about? You know her not.
 She'll brain thee!

True. Fear not!—Come along with me.
 Fair Mistress Constance!

Con. Well, sir!

Wild. [To TRUEWORTH.] Mind!

True. Don't fear.

Love you not neighbour Wildrake?

Con. Love, sir!

True. Yes,

You do!

Con. He loves another, sir; he does;
 I hate him! We were children, sir, together,
 For fifteen years and more; there never came
 The day we did not quarrel, make it up,
 Quarrel again, and make it up again:
 Were never neighbours more like neighbours, sir.
 Since he became a man, and I a woman,
 It still has been the same; nor cared I ever
 To give a frown to any other, sir.
 And now to come and tell me he's in love,
 And ask me to be bridemaide to his bride!

How durst he do it, sir!—To fall in love!
Methinks at least he might have ask'd my leave,
Nor had I wonder'd had he ask'd myself, sir!

Wild. Then give thyself to me!

Con. How! what!

Wild. Be mine;

Thou art the only maid thy neighbour loves.

Con. Art serious, neighbour Wildrake?

Wild. In the church

I'll answer thee, if thou wilt take me; though
I neither dress, nor walk, nor dance, nor know
"The Widow Jones" from an Italian, French,
Or German air.

Con. No more of that.—My hand.

Wild. Givest it as free as thou didst yesterday?

Con. [*Affecting to strike him.*] Nay!

Wild. I will thank thee, give it how thou wilt.

W. Green. A triple wedding! May the Widow Green
Obtain brief hearing e'er she quits the scene,
The Love-Chase to your kindness to commend
In favour of an old, now absent, friend!

END OF THE LOVE-CHASE.



WOMAN'S WIT;

OR,

Love's Disguises.

A PLAY.



TO SAMUEL ROGERS,

This Play

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN, IN 1838.)

<i>Lord Athunree</i>	Mr. WARDE.
<i>Sir Valentine de Grey</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Sir William Sutton</i>	Mr. BARTLEY.
<i>Walsingham</i>	Mr. MACREADY.
<i>Bradford</i>	Mr. WALDRON.
<i>Felton</i>	Mr. PRITCHARD.
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<i>Officer</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Eustace</i>	Miss TAYLOR.
<i>Hero</i>	Miss H. FAUCIT.
<i>Emily</i>	Mrs. SERLE.

W O M A N ' S W I T ;

OR,

LOVE'S DISGUISES.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *Sir William Sutton's House. — An Ante-room leading to a Ball-room. — Music as of a Ball. — Dancers seen in the further Apartment. — Visitors passing in and out.*

Enter from the Ball-room, WALSINGHAM and BRADFORD.

Wal. Fair revels these, Sir William Sutton holds,
And all in honour of the city maid!
Sure the whole town is here, such swarms pass in
And out. Is it a match, as they report,
Betwixt the maid and brave Sir Valentine?

Brad. In prospect, sir; but, yet, I question much,
If in a year hence, nearer than to-day.

She with the lust for conquest is possess'd
Incontinently. Victory with her
Must follow victory. 'Tis strange so long
It pleased her that Lord Athunree should wear
The chains, Sir Valentine aspires to now.

Pity a maid with treasure past compare
Of gorgeous beauty, and with lands so broad,
Should use her riches with such huswifery,
As makes one pity her possession of them!

Wal. Lo you, she dances, and, for partner, takes
Lord Athunree, and not Sir Valentine.

A novel measure that! know you its name?

Brad. No! — Ay! — a liberal measure! — See! — his hand
Retains possession of her waist; while hers,
Nothing repelling, on his shoulder rests,
Permitting neighbourhood so close, embrace
Were scarce in privilege a jot beyond it!

Wal. You know Lord Athunree? — his character? —
The limits of my acquaintance.

Brad. No, sir.

Wal. Sir,
He is a libertine. He hath been much
Abroad. That dance, I will be bound, is ware
Of his importing. Yes; a libertine!

A man of pleasure—in the animal
 Ignoble sense of the term—that owns no curb
 Of honour, generosity, or ruth;
 Nor hath a single grace, except the nerve—
 A contradiction which would make one question
 That valour is, of itself, a thing to boast of—
 To vouch the wrong he does, and stand by it!

Brad. You say this feelingly.

Wal. Because I feel it.

I had a friend, whose heart could scarce lodge weal
 Or woe, without the privity of mine—
 A friend of quick affections—and a villain
 Compass'd the ruin of the maid he loved.
 That villain was the lord, who dances there!
 They fought—Through odds in skill, the honest arm
 Was master'd by the foul; but vengeance, though
 'Tis baffled, is not lost! Good morning; for
 More than an hour or twain, 'tis past the turn
 Of night.—Free thanks for your free converse with
 A stranger.

Brad. Sir, the like I render you:

But will you not delay some moments more?
 In spirit, yet the revels are but young!

Wal. Sir, I am pall'd with them—and were I not,
 That lord approaches, and the sight of him
 Would put out keenest zest of joyance.

Brad. Have with you, then; far as our road is one,
 We'll go together.

Wal. Sir, right willingly!

[*They go out.*]

Enter LORD ATHUNREE and FELTON.

Ath. 'Tis not for him, by sheer effrontery,
 For two years I have held the foremost place
 'Mongst swarms of lovers close besieging her!
 Made one and all to stand aloof, whene'er
 I thought they press'd too near!

Fel. I have marvell'd oft
 At your success.

Ath. Of blood-letting, you know,
 In the high mode, I have as little fear,
 As need of it; and would they come to that,
 I soon convinced them, that I knew their art
 Better than they did.

Fel. To say the truth, the foil
 Has stood you much in stead, when you required
 Weapon of graver practice.—Found you ever
 Your equal in the fence?

Ath. Ay; and my master!
 And therein do I tax my lucky stars,
 That watch not o'er me now. He is here in the house,
 That gentleman from travel late arrived,
 Who, with the gloss of the fair countries which

He has been seeing, shines, and quite puts out
All light of homely worth.

Fel. Sir Valentine?

Ath. The same;

That knight of France, though son of England. Ay,
And would-be captain too, to Venus, sir!
Would take the fortress, all who would carry which,
I at impracticable distance still
Have kept; yet come no nearer than I was
To winning it, when first set down before it.

Fel. Fear'st thou surrender then to him?

Ath. Humph! Fear?

That "fear" 's an ugly word! "Do I fear?" He is quick!
His point and eye together go! He marks
And hits, at once! His sword is part of him,
Part of his hand, sir, as his hand, of his wrist;
The very moment that your weapons touch,
He is here, and there, and in!—his lounge, a shot
You see not till 'tis home! We quarrell'd once,
And twice I felt him, ere a man could say
That he was well *en garde*—but touches, yet
Forerunners sure of heavier payment—so
I gave the battle up!—Yes, I do fear—
Save I have hit him, as I think I have,
Apart from lounge or parry!

Fel. Hit him! How?

Ath. I' the brain and heart, sir, without damage of
The skin! Through the eyes, sir, that take hit and hit,
And ne'er the worse, howe'er the practice tells
Within! He is a man of sentiment!
Sentiment, mark you!—that is, flesh and blood,
I' the summer cool as spring—or water, sir,
At the boiling point without a bubble—or wood
Without ignition in the heart of fire!
An ample span of forehead!—Mark!—a full
And liquid eye—free nostrils—crimson lips,
Cushioning one another without stint
Of the velvet—and a chin could show a copse
Of beard—a man, sir, with all these, and yet
With wishes innocent as thoughts of babes!
A lie, sir, on the face of it!—yet such
He passes for unto himself—believes
Indeed he is, and so of others judges
Through the false colour of this self-delusion—
Particularly women. He would have them
Earth to himself—to all else, things of heaven!
Impassive to impression, as the air
Which man ne'er yet gave form or colour to!

Fel. Well?

Ath. Saw you not I danced with her just now?

Fel. Fair Hero?

Ath. Yes; I did dance with her a free

And liberal dance—the dance of contact, else
 Forbid—abandoning to the free hand
 The sacred waist! while face to face, till breath
 Kisses with breath, and eye embraces eye.
 Your trancéd coil relaxing, straightening, round
 And round in wavy measure, you entwine
 Circle with circle, till the swimming brain
 And panting heart in swoony lapse give o'er!

Fel. I know; that foreign dance thou, late, brought'st home.

Ath. The very same; I taught it her, and first
 Danced with her, to-night.

Fel. I had admired
 To see you.

Ath. Had you not, I had admired!
 The card-room kept you. Give you joy—You won!
 But to the dance. The evening half was out,
 And still he held her ear.

Fel. Sir Valentine?

Ath. Who else? who else that seat pre-eminent
 By her fair side had held in spite of me.
 I watch'd for my occasion, and it came.
 Some friend besought a moment's audience. Ere
 'Twas done, her waist was in my custody;
 Her white arm hanging from my shoulder, where
 Her hand, confiding, couch'd. "Your game goes well!"
 I whisper'd her; "Play boldly, and 'tis yours!"
 The measure this, to set the outline off!
 Give sway to thy rich figure! Abandon thee
 To the spirit of the dance! Let it possess thee!
 Float thee, as air were footing for thee! stud
 Thy cheeks with smiles of fire, and give thine eye
 The lightning's dazzling play! fix them on mine,
 That each may feed the other's, like to tongues
 With converse, thick'ning converse!"

Fel. Well?—I see
 Thy drift!

Ath. Thou shouldst have seen the issue on't;—
 While, like a pupil at a task he loves,
 Whose aptitude with eager will outstrips
 His master's bidding, she was twenty times
 The thing I wish'd her! How she rose and sank
 With springy instep; while her yielding waist—
 Well as her waving neck, her beauteous head—
 Her falling shoulders, and round bust, show'd off!
 A world she look'd and moved of passionate
 Quick sense—of loveliness and joyousness—
 Of which, be sure, I pass'd the reigning lord!
 Nor with the dance did my dominion cease;
 But when her drooping lids, relaxéd steps,
 Disparted lips, and colour vanishing,
 Gave note she must give o'er—her languid form,
 Close girdled by my arm, her hand in mine,

Her cheek for pillow on my shoulder laid,
I led her to a couch, where courtesy
Of course admitted tendance!

Fel. What of him?

Ath. He is mad, sir! When he turn'd, and noted us,
He look'd as one who question'd his own eyes;
Then stood awhile—no doubt admiring how
Step did keep loving time, and how we moved
In closest neighbourhood, disparting but
To meet—her arm, a link, ne'er letting go!
Then with a start of sudden fury went,
And cast him on a seat with folded arms,
And knitted brows scanning us, as he wish'd
His eyes could do the office of the lightning.
I cared to mark no more—I saw the storm
I wish'd would come, was on; and knew 'twould hold!

Fel. And does it?

Ath. Yes; thrice she advances made—
As women know to make them, unobserved,
Except to practised eyes—to draw his notice.
Dropp'd her glove near him—wish'd she had a chair,
And one at his hand—complain'd of thirst, and just
A salver brought to him with wine—but all
In vain—right in his eyes display'd her form
In attitude of tender languishment—
And to no more account than offerings
Of gems before an idol made of stone!
But see; we have danced out the night, and day
With fresh and flushy vigour fast comes on;
You hear the rout breaks up. Attend him home;
Obtain his ear; know nothing, but be sure
Of slightest opportunity he gives
For her disparagement, to take advantage.
Here comes the Queen of the night, and all forlorn,
As she had lost her throne!

Enter HERO, leaning upon EMILY.

Emily. What miss you, Hero,
That thus you pause and turn; go on again,
And pause and turn again? Fear'st anything,
Thou hast forgot?

Hero. No! I have danced too much
To-night. The night before it was the same!
No rest—All revels!—Madness, with a frame
That is anything but iron. *[Turns to look back.]*

Emily. There again!
I'm sure there's something that you miss—What is it?

Hero. My spirits only! Are not yours nigh wasted?

[Turns again.]

Ath. *[Aside to FELTON.]* She waits for him!—He saw her
home last night.
My life on't she must look for other squire.

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 Or woe, without the privy of mine—
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 Compass'd the ruin of the maid he loved.
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 Was master'd by the foul ; but vengeance, though
 'Tis baffled, is not lost ! Good morning ; for
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Part of his hand, sir, as his hand, of his wrist;
The very moment that your weapons touch,
He is here, and there, and in!—his lounge, a shot
You see not till 'tis home! We quarrell'd once,
And twice I felt him, ere a man could say
That he was well *en garde*—but touches, yet
Forerunners sure of heavier payment—so
I gave the battle up!—Yes, I do fear—
Save I have hit him, as I think I have,
Apart from lounge or parry!

Fel. Hit him! How?

Ath. I' the brain and heart, sir, without damage of
The skin! Through the eyes, sir, that take hit and hit,
And ne'er the worse, howe'er the practice tells
Within! He is a man of sentiment!
Sentiment, mark you!—that is, flesh and blood,
I' the summer cool as spring—or water, sir,
At the boiling point without a bubble—or wood
Without ignition in the heart of fire!
An ample span of forehead!—Mark!—a full
And liquid eye—free nostrils—crimson lips,
Cushioning one another without stint
Of the velvet—and a chin could show a copse
Of beard—a man, sir, with all these, and yet
With wishes innocent as thoughts of babes!
A lie, sir, on the face of it!—yet such
He passes for unto himself—believes
Indeed he is, and so of others judges
Through the false colour of this self-delusion—
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 By her fair side had held in spite of me.
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 Some friend besought a moment's audience. Ere
 'Twas done, her waist was in my custody;
 Her white arm hanging from my shoulder, where
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 Whose aptitude with eager will outstrips
 His master's bidding, she was twenty times
 The thing I wish'd her! How she rose and sank
 With springy instep; while her yielding waist—
 Well as her waving neck, her beauteous head—
 Her falling shoulders, and round bust, show'd off!
 A world she look'd and moved of passionate
 Quick sense—of loveliness and joyousness—
 Of which, be sure, I pass'd the reigning lord!
 Nor with the dance did my dominion cease;
 But when her drooping lids, relaxéd steps,
 Disparted lips, and colour vanishing,
 Gave note she must give o'er—her languid form,
 Close girdled by my arm, her hand in mine,

Her cheek for pillow on my shoulder laid,
I led her to a couch, where courtesy
Of course admitted tendance!

Fel. What of him?

Ath. He is mad, sir! When he turn'd, and noted us,
He look'd as one who question'd his own eyes;
Then stood awhile—no doubt admiring how
Step did keep loving time, and how we moved
In closest neighbourhood, disparting but
To meet—her arm, a link, ne'er letting go!
Then with a start of sudden fury went,
And cast him on a seat with folded arms,
And knitted brows scanning us, as he wish'd
His eyes could do the office of the lightning.
I cared to mark no more—I saw the storm
I wish'd would come, was on; and knew 'twould hold!

Fel. And does it?

Ath. Yes; thrice she advances made—
As women know to make them, unobserved,
Except to practised eyes—to draw his notice.
Dropp'd her glove near him—wish'd she had a chair,
And one at his hand—complain'd of thirst, and just
A salver brought to him with wine—but all
In vain—right in his eyes display'd her form
In attitude of tender languishment—
And to no more account than offerings
Of gems before an idol made of stone!
But see; we have danced out the night, and day
With fresh and flushy vigour fast comes on;
You hear the rout breaks up. Attend him home;
Obtain his ear; know nothing, but be sure
Of slightest opportunity he gives
For her disparagement, to take advantage.
Here comes the Queen of the night, and all forlorn,
As she had lost her throne!

Enter HERO, leaning upon EMILY.

Emily. What miss you, Hero,
That thus you pause and turn; go on again,
And pause and turn again? Fear'st anything,
Thou hast forgot?

Hero. No! I have danced too much
To-night. The night before it was the same!
No rest—All revels!—Madness, with a frame
That is anything but iron. *[Turns to look back.]*

Emily. There again!
I'm sure there's something that you miss—What is it?

Hero. My spirits only! Are not yours nigh wasted?

Ath. *[Aside to FELTON.]* She waits for him!—He saw her
home last night.
My life on't she must look for other squire. *[Turns again.]*

Emily. Come.

Hero. Are they dancing yet?

Emily. What do you hear,
To make you ask? You're dreaming! Saw you not
That the musicians left the room before us,
And scarce a dozen laggards then remain'd,
Besides ourselves?

Hero. I know not what I saw,
I am tired—heart-tired—too tired to move or rest—
A weariness, won't let me go or stay!

Ath. He comes—accost him—ask him of the ball.

[*Aside to FELTON.*]

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

Fel. See I Sir Valentine, the last of all
The revellers?

Sir Val. You see him, sir! 'Tis e'en
Sir Valentine.

Fel. Liked you the ball to-night?

Sir Val. Yes!—No!

Fel. What! Liked it, and disliked it?

Sir Val. Yes!

Fel. It was a very handsome ball.

Sir Val. It was.

Fel. What was amiss, then? Was the music bad?

Sir Val. The music far from bad!—most excellent!
Incomparably good—It were in place
In a concert-room,—I found no fault with the music.

Fel. Are you not fond of dancing, then?

Sir Val. I am—

Innocent pastime taken innocently
In honest mood!—But there are natures, sir,
That should eschew it—which 'tis pernicious to—
As wine, that's mirth to some, to some is madness!
I find no fault with dancing! 'Tis an act
Sets beauty off, proportion, grace—when these
Are too set off by modesty. For men—
And women more especially—of the vein
That's opposite, I'd have them lookers on—
For their own sakes first—next for the sake of those,
Who what they'd blush to do, lament to see
Enacted.

Fel. Was there any dance to-night
Offended you?

Sir Val. N—o, sir—I cannot say—
Perhaps there is no harm in any dance,
I am not sure—Some may give too much license—
Yet not so much, but e'en in such a case
By delicacy 'twill be carried off
Becomingly. I might perhaps object—
Yet where's the thing that can defy objection?
But this I say, sir, and to this I'll stand,

That modesty being to woman more
 Than beauty—for, without it, beauty's cheap—
 That woman, who can show her beauty off
 Before her modesty, forgets herself,
 And merits forfeit of that high respect,
 Which noble minds would bear her!

Hero. [*To EMILY.*] What lady, can you tell me, danced
 to-night
 As lady should not dance?

Emily. I do not know.

Hero. [*To FELTON.*] Do you, sir?

Fel. No!

Hero. [*To LORD ATHUNREE.*] My lord, do you?

Ath. No, lady.

Hero. Perhaps some lady whom the gentleman
 Danced with himself, and none, beside him, noted!

Sir Val. No lady, madam, 'twas that danced with me,
 Who yields to me her hand shall never risk
 Herself—at least by my o'erstepping. She
 Shall find I know the honour that she does me;
 See, in the freedom of the frolic measure,
 My reverence for her sex attending her;
 And then be handed to her seat again,
 For mine own credit sake, if not for hers,
 By all approved, as gracefully come off
 In partnery of honest joyance!

No lady, madam, 'twas that danced with me.

Ath. The plague repay him for the lesson he
 So freely reads me—in her presence too!

Hero. Wilt please you name the fair that gave offence?

Sir Val. 'Twere a presumptuous act for my poor tongue.
 But if you know her, you must know her beauty;
 Wherein I ne'er met fair to liken to her,
 And that more fittingly shall name her for me.
 A noble stature stopping there, where sex
 Would have it reach, and bid it go no farther;
 A head of antique mould, magnificent,
 As may consist with softness and with sweetness;
 Features, advertisement of thoughts and moods,
 Wishes and fancies, such as it beseems
 To lodge with chastity and tenderness
 In sumptuous palace of rich loveliness;
 And limbs of mould and act therewith consorting,
 Making a paragon of symmetry!—
 Gods, to such homeliness of use perverted,
 As properties, to them were homeliness,
 Should spurn to be applied to!

Emily. Are you ill,
 That you turn pale?

Hero. Ill!—What should make me ill?
 I could be angry, were it worth my while
 At such disparagement of one, it seems

That's known to me,—but calumny is a thing
That blurs itself, and I should be despised,
Did I pay heed to!

Sir Val. Lady, you are right;
It shall be calumny—it *should* be so!
Vouchers so fair, should never be forsworn.
Alas for him, who is incredulous,
Yet would believe them rather far than doubt them!

[*SIR VALENTINE goes out, followed by FELTON.*]

Hero. A most strange gentleman!—An oddity!
I took him for a man of sense!—Didn't you?
A fanciful and churlish gentleman!
Looks sour because another man looks pleased!
Lord Athunree, wilt see my carriage brought
Close to the door before I venture out,
If not to tax your gallantry too much?

Ath. I fly to do it.

[*Goes out.*]

Hero. Let me weep a moment
Upon your neck—There! I am better now.
Are my eyes red?

Emily. Not much.

Hero. I will appear
To have been laughing! Laughter will bring tears.
Most excellent!—You should have kept it, though,
For another time! I have not strength to laugh!
As 'tis, I am so weak, I laugh and cry.

Re-enter ATHUNREE.

Lord Athunree, your courtesy has lost you
A most facetious story!

Ath. Tell it me.

Hero. Tell it you! Tell it! I am dead already
With hearing it, and must not hear't again,
Would I go home to-night! A little plague,
To make me laugh, and know that I should cry,
For lack of very strength.—Come, let us go!
A charming ball! Fair night—most happy night!
I'll find a time to make *you* cry with laughing.

[*To EMILY.*]

A charming night—a very charming night.

[*They go out.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the House of Monsieur de l'Epée.*

Enter, from an inner Room, WALSINGHAM and MONSIEUR DE L'EPEE.

De l'Epée. Your progress answers to your practice, sir;
Cause have you none for discontent. Confess,

You play the foil with twice the ease you did
A month ago. Might I be credited,
Not only each new week, but even day,
Puts to the blush the former one, so fast
You catch the mystery of the fair art.

Wal. Yes; but my fellow-pupil heads me still.

De l'Epée. His quickness is your master.

Wal. Yet, 'tis strange!

With all my pains, I toil behind him still,
And he a very stripling!

De l'Epée. 'Tis not strength
That makes the odds, but art. To turn the foil
In practised hand, almost a wheaten straw
Hath stamina enough. The point deceived,
An infant's arm, in distance, lounges home.
The art is strength, and length, and everything.

Wal. To say the truth, it is a noble art,
On which agility and grace attend,
With proper manhood keeping company,
As on none other;—making lightest ease
To champion force, and, as you say, bear off
The palm from it. In every act and state—
Salute, guard, parry, feint, or pass—it hath
A bearing worthy of the eyes of kings
And their high consorts, when a practised hand
Like yours takes up the foil.

De l'Epée. You flatter, sir!

Wal. By my proud honour, no! But, to your pupil—
Who is he?

De l'Epée. I know not.

Wal. He is very young.

De l'Epée. Yes; by his looks he has a teen or twain
To count;—though never scholar study plied
With manlier resolve and constancy.
It often moves my wonder, that so slight
And delicate a frame should undergo
What, to robuster mould, a thousand times
I have mark'd was weariness. Scarce lays he down
The foil, before he takes it up again,
Some parry, feint, or lunge, unmaster'd yet,
To practise;—which he does with zest so keen,
I have thought, at times, that in his fancy's eye
There stood, before his foil, an enemy,
The actor of some unatoned wrong,
Whose heart each thrust was meant for.—A good morning!
I am waited for.

Wal. Good morning to you, sir. [DE L'EPEE goes out.]

A noble fellow that!—a soldier who
A mighty captain follow'd, for the strides
With which he led to glory—nay, for them
Deserted not, when fortune back'd a world,
Marshall'd against her off-cast favourite!

Talk you of scars?—That Frenchman bears on crown,
 Body, and limb, his vouchers, palpable,
 For many a thicket he has struggled through
 Of briery danger—wondering that he
 Came off with even life, when right and left
 His mates dropp'd thick beside him. A true man!
 His rations with his master gone—for he
 Was honour's soldier, that ne'er changes sides—
 He left his country for a foreign one,
 To teach his gallant art, and earn a home.
 I know him to be honest, generous,
 High-soul'd, and modest; every way a grace
 To the fine martial nation whence he sprang!*

EUSTACE enters from Inner Room.

My fellow-pupil! [*Aside.*] That was a shrewd guess
 The Frenchman made. Are all these pains to pay
 An enemy?—then is his case my own.
 Would I could gain his confidence! but still,
 Oft as I try, he foils me with reserve,
 He shows to none beside! One more attempt.—
 So, fellow-pupil! You have given o'er at last.
 Right well you fenced to-day! You are weary?

Eust. No.

Good morning, sir.—

Wal. I' faith, you "sir" not me!

We have been mates too long, methinks, for term,
 So niggard, fellow-pupil!—Walsingham
 Is my name. I prithee, when thou next accost'st me,
 Say Walsingham. Is't not enough, your foil
 Keeps me at distance—will not let me in—
 Rebukes me! shames me!—will you with your tongue
 O'erbear me too? Call me not "sir," I pray,
 But Walsingham.

Eust. It were to make too free
 For mere acquaintanceship.

Wal. Acquaintanceship!

You have known me for a year. Friendship has grown
 In half that time!

Eust. Friendship grows not by time.

Wal. In sooth 'twould seem so. Daily have we met
 For good a year—nor yet have shaken hands.
 Give me thy hand, and let us hence be friends!
 What! will you not? I' faith, you should—you shall!
 I'll take it spite of you—yea, though you frown,
 And call yourself my foe—which would be hard;
 To make a foe, striving to make a friend.

Eust. [*After a pause.*] I'll shake hands with you.

* This is a portrait. My brothers of Glasgow know and honour
 the gallant man who suggested it, and will judge how far it is a
 faithful one. At all events it is not flattered.

Wal. Ha!—a hearty grasp!
But take it not away so soon again,
Nor where you give your hand, refuse your eye.
Why don't you look at me?

Eust. Let go my hand!

Wal. Such haste to take away—so frank to give?

Eust. Let go my hand!—Well, you may keep it, sir;
You cannot make it like its prison, nor,
When once 'tis free from't, enter it again.

Wal. Well—call me Walsingham, I'll let it go.
Why must I force you thus to be my friend?

Eust. Why should you? Force made never yet a friend!

Wal. For kindness, then! why would you hold me off?
A man repell'd of fortune! See you not,
I am not of the vein of those on whom
She lavishes her smiles—nor do I think
With surfeit of such sweet you bought that cast
Of thoughtfulness, which when I look upon you,
Like to my glass, shows me, methinks, myself!—
I am a man of honour and of heart—
Ah, too much heart! Come, call me Walsingham,
And then I'll let you go.

Eust. Well—Walsingham!

Wal. I' faith, most kindly did you sound my name;
Tongue never fell it yet more sweetly from,
Save one!—Save one!

Eust. Farewell!

Wal. We'll walk together.

Eust. Nay.

Wal. Will you have it so, why have it so;
My love is not that sturdy beggar yet,
But spurning may suffice to stop its craving!
Yet ere you leave me, hear me—and, then, go.
Methinks our fates in something are alike;
To prove it so, or not, I'll tell thee mine.
Give thee my confidence—make thee indeed my friend!
Now, once for all, what say you?

Eust. Be it so.

Wal. Thy hand again, then!—Do we go together?

Eust. We do!—Have with you!

Wal. Now we are friends, for ever! [They go out.

SCENE II.—A Room in Hero's Town House.

Enter SIR WILLIAM and EMILY.

Sir Wil. At sea again! Blown ever from the port
We'd have her harbour in, by her wild fancies,
And far from land as ever! 'Twas my hope
This suitor would have proved sure anchorage.

Emily. And so 'twas mine. She'll ne'er be held by suitor,

Long as there bows another—save it be
By a miracle. I say it, though I love her!

Sir Wil. And yet that lord hath held her.

Emily. So he hath,
By dint of mere audacity—some art,
He owns, makes other suitors quail, and she,
For vanity, hath still affected him,
As proud to have a vassal in a man
To whom his fellows bow.

Sir Wil. I am glad so slight
His power. I know him for a profligate,
With broken coffers, to replenish which
He merely follows her.

Emily. His practice 'twas
Which to this issue led—On some account
I know not—nay, nor guess—he durst not trest
Sir Valentine with overbearing mien,
So took advantage of fair Hero's weakness,
To play upon't, expose, and with disgust
Surfeit the man he fear'd.

Sir Wil. And he succeeded?

Emily. Ay, to the full, sir, as I have possess'd you.

Sir Wil. I am sorry for it. He had begun to love her,
And would have made to her a worthy husband;
Safe guardian to her wealth; and one to make
A proud wife of a higher dame than she!
It crossly hath fallen out. But she is piqued,
You say at his desertion?

Emily. Much, sir!—Much!
She wept, as I acquainted you.

Sir Wil. You did,
And matter see I there. Unfeign'd tears—
And such were hers—from deep-laid fountains flow,
Abiding in the heart! The argument
Which draws them thence, as deep must even go.
A curling lip I had not heeded—that
Were simple scorn—but they who weep, for scorn,
Must weep for something more. Sir Valentine
Hath not his peer in England! Trust me, girl,
She's not so blind with folly, as not to see
His paramount desert!—Where is she?

Emily. Lock'd
In her chamber with her milliner,—so says
Her maid. These three hours have I craved admission,
But all in vain. She has not yet press'd pillow
Sufficient to repair her spirits from
The waste of yesternight.

Sir Wil. A wayward girl!
New dresses, pleasures, lovers—all things new,
Except herself. Would *that* would change, as well!
Some mode she studies with her minister
Of novelty, to flog all former folly.

[Knocking.]

What sober knock is that?—Such seldom calls
At her fantastic door. Who knocks?

Enter Servant.

Servant. A man,
Of formal habit and consorting speech,
Usher to one most young and fair; a maid
Who seems to know no use for beauty, but
To mortify it with ungainly guise.
She asks to see the mistress of the house.

Sir Wil. Admit her!—On what errand can she come?

[*Servant goes out, and returns, showing in CLEVER,
followed by HERO, both disguised as Quakers.*]

Who art thou?

Clever. Man unto Ruth Mapleson,
Who with the woman of the house would speak.

Sir Wil. The woman of the house!

Emily. Ruth Mapleson!

Hero. Friend, am I right? This house of vanity,
Is't the abode of that unfortunate
They call the City Maid? who, to the use
Of one, perverts what Heaven lavishly
Committed to her, for the good of many!
Is this her house?—and if it is, I pray you
Acquaint her that a sister, pitying
Her hapless state of blindness, ignorance,
Omission and offence, hath come to her
To clear her vision, to inform her mind,
To teach her occupation, and from evil
To turn her steps aside.—Umph!

Clever. Umph!

Sir Wil. My breath
Is almost stopp'd with wonder!

Emily. So is mine.

What can it mean?

Sir Wil. Some poor fanatic 'tis,
Whose zeal hath warp'd her reason.

Hero. Sinful man,
Thus is it with the children of the flesh!
What argues wisdom they misconstrue madness!
Though through perverseness rather than conviction.
Tremble!—Look down!—Abase thee to the dust!
Shouldst thou not blush at thy grey hairs, the vouchers
For thriftless years, for profitless experience!
'Tis winter with thee—harvest-time is past—
What hast thou garner'd? Chaff instead of grain!
What doest thou with gauds like these, thy trappings?
Why standest thou beneath this roof of pride,
That shouldst be thinking of the charnel-house
And the attire of its inhabitant?
I know thee uncle to that maid of lightness,
That mistress of this house of emptiness,

And whom I come to chasten and reform !
Umph !

Clever. Umph !

Emily. Dear sir ! who is't ? I grow uneasy !
With sense of the unearthly, and I feel
As though an apparition stood before me,
And wish she were away !

Sir Wil. And so do I !

Hero. [*To EMILY.*] And thou, poor flesh and blood !—illusion !
—heirdom

O' the worm ! that think'st thyself all soundness, yet
Art all corruption ! Why abidest thou in
The lazar-house ? Depart from it ! Pull off
Its dress, and don the clean and wholesome guise
Of plainness and humility—Umph !

Clever. Umph !

Sir Wil. This bold intrusion and address——

Hero. Peace, Satan !

And yet, perhaps I wrong you ! Privily
You may condemn proud Hero's fantasies ?

Sir Wil. I do !

Emily. And so do I !

Hero. O do you so ?

Then are ye not, as I did reckon you,
O' the children of the Prince of Darkness ?

Sir Wil. and Emily. No !

Hero. You see that she is miserably vain ?

Emily. We else were blind.

Sir Wil. Stone blind !

Hero. Capricious ?

Emily. Yes ! As many moods as there's hours in the day.

Sir Wil. Say minutes, rather !

Hero. Fond of pleasure ?

Emily. 'Tis her constant occupation.

Sir Wil. 'Tis her meat

And drink ; rest, business, studies, prayers, and sleep !

Hero. She hath no constancy in aught—
Lovers especially ?

Emily. She changes them
Continually.

Sir Wil. As she does her dresses
Show her a new one, she casts off the last,
How new soe'er put on !

Hero. I pity her.

Emily. She scarce deserves it.

Sir Wil. Pity is too good

For such a piece of waywardness, perverseness,
Pride, folly, fantasy and emptiness !

Hero. So then we are all of the same mind ?

Emily. Exactly.

Sir Wil. Not a pin's point difference !

Hero. You would approve that I reform her then ?

Emily. Reform her ! can you do so, do it !

Sir Wil. Do!
 Do! Make her anything but what she is.
Emily. Change cannot fail to better her.
Sir Wil. No change
 Can make her worse!—Reform her, pray!
Hero. I will.
Sir Wil. and Emily. When?
Hero. When you take her for another thing
 And find her just the same!—O, uncle, fie!
 Fie, Emily! Is this your loyalty?
Sir Wil. What means this metamorphosis?
Hero. Defence
 Of my sex's rights—assertion of my own!
 Instruction to that master-work, call'd man!
 Protest and re-establishment of due
 Prerogative! reduction of rebellion,
 Transform'd from rear'd crest to bended knee!
 Pains, penalties, bonds, confiscations, deaths,
 To follow thereupon!
Sir Wil. Why, niece, what wind
 Has brought this change of weather?
Hero. Are you a man?
Sir Wil. I trust I am!
Hero. Then if you are, you know
 The privileges of a single woman.
 We have few, we thank you, when we change the state
 Of single blessedness, most rightly dubb'd—
 Is't not a single woman's right to rule?
Sir Wil. It is.
Hero. To have her will her law?
Sir Wil. It is.
Hero. To have as many tastes, moods, fits, as she likes?
Sir Wil. It is.
Hero. To come, to go, to smile, to frown,
 To please, to pain, to love, to hate, do aught
 Without dispute?
Sir Wil. It is.
Hero. Is't not enough,
 You have leave to look upon her—listen to her—
 Stand in her presence—wait upon her? Must
 Her 'haviour, speech, be what you like, or what
 It likes her sovereign self that they should be?
Sir Wil. What likes her sovereign self!
Hero. You are a man!
 Would all your sex were like you! Who are not,
 Are not for me, believe me! Look you, uncle!
 I'll make the saucy traitor feel my power,
 Or I will break my heart! He thinks me fair—
 I thank him! Well-proportion'd—very much
 Beholden to him! Dignified and graceful—
 A man of shrewd perception! very!—send him
 On expedition of discovery!
Sir Wil. Whom mean you, Hero?

Hero. Whom?—Sir Valentine!
 He has made his bow! Indeed, a gracious one—
 A stately, courtly, condescending one!
 Ne'er may I curtsy, if he bow not lower!
 I'll bring him to his knees as a spoil'd child
 With uplift hands that asketh pardon; then
 Command him up, and never see me more!

Sir Wil. Why, how hath this befallen?

Hero. I did not dance
 To please him! No, sir! He is a connoisseur
 In dancing!—hath a notion of his own
 Of a step! In carriage, attitude, has taste,
 Dainty as palate of an epicure,
 Which, if you hit not to a hair, disgust
 Takes the place of keenest zest! He is sick of me!
 My feet the frolic measure may indulge in,
 But not my heart—mine eye, my cheek, my lip,
 Must not be cognizant of what I do—
 As wood and marble could be brought to dance,
 And look like wood and marble! I shall teach him
 Another style! Come! I have found you out;
 Will you compound for your sedition,
 And help me? Come! How say you, little traitress?

Emily. Content.

Hero. And you, most reverend rebellion?

Sir Wil. Command me aught, that I can do in reason.

Hero. Can do in reason! In what reason? There
 Are fifty kinds of reason! There's a fool's reason,
 And a wise man's reason, and a knave's reason, and
 An honest man's reason, and an infant's reason,
 And reason of a grandfather—but there's
 A reason 'bove them all, and that alone
 Can stand me now in stead—a woman's reason!
 Wilt thou be subject unto me in that?

Sir Wil. I will.

But say where practised you, to act so well
 The solemn friend?

Hero. At school.

Sir Wil. At school!

Hero. I learn'd it from one I knew and loved there—a sweet
 girl

Half, by the sect that uses it, brought up.
 But she of thought and will, therewith consorting
 The mistress likewise was, most veritable!
 Her name was Helen Mowbray—By the arts
 Of that same lord to whom I owe the coil
 I would unwind me from, and whom, through whim,
 Not liking, I have countenanced, 'tis said
 She fell—but not in my belief. How is this?
 I am growing serious! You will help me?

Sir Wil. Yes.

Hero. That's my good uncle! That's a darling uncle!

There ne'er was kinder, nor more sensible!
 A good, dear, wise, obedient, docile uncle!
 Give me a kiss! Hence, Master Clever! Do
 What I directed you—Sir Valentine
 Be he at home;—invite him where I advised you—
 To the house at Greenwich. [CLEVER goes out.]

Sir Wil. What dost thou intend?

Hero. Order the carriage—no; it must be one
 They lend for hire:—and come along with me—
 I'll tell you on the way. Emily!—Uncle!
 Look you! [*Throws her glove down.*] I'll have him, as my
 glove, that there,
 At my feet to lie, till I please to pick him up!
 And I *will* pick him up—but in a way!
 There!—give it me again—O, you dear uncle,
 To help my plot!—do what I wish!—You ought
 To be an uncle! There's another kiss!
 And if I do not make *him* kiss the rod,
 I'm ne'er a niece deserving such an uncle!
 Come! come!—I did not dance to please him! Come.
 [They go out.]

SCENE III.—*Sir Valentine's House.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

Sir Val. Oh, pitiable case! so rich a stamp,
 And yet the metal base! For what high things
 Did nature fashion her!—whose rich intent
 Had she but half fulfill'd, no wealth, no state
 That earth can furnish, for aggrandizement
 Of craving and insatiate ambition,
 Conferr'd on her, had given her half her due,
 Far less its debtor made her! Misery!
 To find the good we hoped, the bane we hate
 Hate!—O, perverse and doubtful course of love,
 That in the goal, it pants for, finds its grave!
 That reaches for a bliss, and clasps a pang!
 That thinks it owns a mine, and finds it none!
 O beggary most poor, that from the lapse
 Of heap'd-up riches grows!

Enter Servant.

Servant. You are wanted, sir.

Sir Val. Who wants me?

Servant. One who brings an errand from
 Sir William Sutton, and craves speech with you.

Sir Val. Admit him. [Servant goes out.]

Enter CLEVER.

Well?

Clever. Are you the man they call
 Sir Valentine de Grey?

Sir Val. The man?

Clever. The man.

Sir Val. I see!—I am Sir Valentine de Grey.

Clever. Then, being he, another man they call Sir William Sutton, sends me here to pray Thy company this afternoon, to meet Some friends who dine with him at Greenwich.

Sir Val. Say,
I cannot come.

Clever. Art thou engaged, friend?

Sir Val. No.

Clever. Then speak'st thou not the truth. Thou canst come.

Sir Val. Say,
I will not come.

Clever. He bade me say to thee
Thou *must* come.

Sir Val. Must come?

Clever. Yes; so come along.
For he gave charge to me to bring thee—and I said I would; and not to bring thee, were To break my word, and I must *keep* my word.

Sir Val. Tell him, I was not in.

Clever. I will not tell
A lie.

Sir Val. Art thou his servant?

Clever. No; but man
To one that's niece to him—that's, in the flesh—
Not in the spirit.

Sir Val. Wherefore?

Clever. Know'st thou him,
And know'st thou not he is a man of sin?
Ruth Mapleson is of the faithful!

Sir Val. Who?

Clever. Ruth Mapleson.

Sir Val. I know no niece he hath,
Save one—fair Mistress Sutton.

Clever. Name her not—
Daughter of darkness!

Sir Val. Liar!

Clever. Thou dost lie
To call me so.

Sir Val. Wretch!

Clever. Thou dost lie again.
I am a godly and a happy man,
That waits upon Ruth Mapleson, the niece
Of him they call Sir William Sutton; and
Cousin to Hero Sutton, whom in naught
Ruth Mapleson resembles—face and form
Excepted; wherein she might pass for her,
She is so like her!

Sir Val. Like her! Saidst thou like her?

Clever. Now that's hypocrisy! Thou heard me say it.
Like her in voice, complexion, feature—so
Put sober Ruth in giddy Hero's dress,
Thee'dst swear—What did I say—Young man, this comes
Of evil communication.

Sir Val. Well?

Clever. Thee'dst say,
'Twas giddy Hero's self, though all the while
'Twas sober Ruth thee saw'st.

Sir Val. Incredible!

Clever. Young man, thee keepest company that speak
One thing and think another! That's my hand;
I take't away, and show it thee again:
Is it another hand?

Sir Val. Knave, 'tis the same.

Clever. Miscall me not, friend! Knave is not my name,
But Obadiah. Use me civilly,
That do instruct thee, who art ignorant.
Not more in verity is that hand the same,
Than is Ruth Mapleson, in perfect likeness
Of feature, figure, voice, complexion, all
That makes the outward woman—just the same,
As Hero Sutton! But, alas, within,
Winter and summer are not less akin!

Sir Val. How, knave?

Clever. I told thee not to call me "knave:"
My name is Obadiah.

Sir Val. Obadiah

I'll call thee then. How are these cousins as
Unlike, as winter is to summer?

Clever. Thus.—Is winter barren? so is the maiden Hero;—
Is it made up of fogs and rain? so is the maiden Hero, of
vapours and the spleen;—Hath it much cloud and little sun? so
hath the maiden Hero great discontent, small content;—Hath
it long night, and brief day? so hath the maiden Hero lasting
displeasure, short favour;—Is there any depending upon it? no
more is there upon the maiden Hero;—Do you wish it heartily
away? so would you be rid of the maiden Hero.

Sir Val. I fear thou art a slanderer.

Clever. I see

Thou lack'st good manners, which is grievous, friend,
In one of thy degree. Thou callest names
As scavengers that quarrel in the streets,
Most unbecomingly!

Sir Val. Well; now proceed.

What of her cousin?

Clever. Though a godly man,
Yet am I flesh and blood, and thou dost vex
My spirit, friend, by so misusing me.
I tell thee once again, my name is not
Liar, nor knave, nor slanderer, nor aught
But Obadiah.

Sir Val. Well—enough of that ;
Her cousin ? Come ! Her cousin ?

Clever. Though I am
A man of peace, I am a valiant man.
I combat not, but yet the elements
Of war are given me, friend ! I am full of them,
Save what is in me of the goodly thing
That mortifies the flesh, and keeps them in
Subjection ! Yea, I am a warlike man !
Yea, verily, a very warlike man !

Sir Val. I ask thy pardon.

Clever. I do grant it thee ;
Thou dost a proper thing ; and now shalt hear,
Wherein the maiden Ruth, who outwardly,
Is to the maiden Hero what that maiden
Is to herself, is, inwardly, reverse
As summer is to winter.

Sir Val. Prithee on !

Clever. Is summer fertile ? is summer clear ? hath it little
cloud, and much sun ; long day, and short night—and that
more like day, than night ? is summer constant, and do you
wish it never away ? so is the maiden Ruth bounteous ; so is
the maiden Ruth cheerful ; so hath she twenty smiles for one
frown ; lasting favour, brief displeasure—which you would
almost take to be favour ; so is she little liable to change ; so
would you wish to have her ever with you !

Sir Val. Where dwells this cousin ?

Clever. In Greenwich, friend, whither thou goest ; not in
the same house with him that sends for thee—for light dwelleth
not with darkness—but in another habitation, where her books,
and her flowers, and her own sweet thoughts, which are fairer
and wiser than either, are her only companions.

Sir Val. I'll go with thee to Greenwich straight ! Lead
on !

Clever. Hold, friend !—You must do all things soberly.

[*They go out, CLEVER preceding with extreme gravity.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Outskirts of London.*

Enter EUSTACE and WALSINGHAM.

Eust. Now for the confidence you promised me.

Wal. Canst thou not guess my story ? Look at me !
Seem my years more than his you'd reckon in
Life's outset, when beneath our feet all's flowers,
Above our heads all sun ? Canst not divine

What could alone o'ercast and wither thus?
Nor only take away the adjuncts sweet
Of that fair prime of hope, but prospect leave
Of nought but cloud and barrenness?

Eust. Ambition?

Wal. No; that's an after-game. There's one we play
Before, o'er which the heart will throb, as o'er
None other!—where we throw the die, whose turn
Nine times in ten's the oracle foretells
All chance to come! which, if we play in earnest—
And light are they who of that game make light—
We make ourselves for ever, or lose all,
Doubling the value of our being, or
Reducing it to naught!—a game, methinks,
Which you have play'd at—Love.—Am I not right?

Eust. You are.

Wal. You didn't win?

Eust. [*hesitatingly*]. I didn't.

Wal. How?

You speak as one that yet did neither lose—
Whose game not yet was out—a chance, although
With heavy odds against him! Mark me; if
Thou hast rivals whom she entertains like thee,
With just so much of hope, as may suffice
To keep them suitors still, while each can say,
She's mine, as well as t'other—give her up!
Away with her! Abandon her for ever!
Thou woo'st, what, if thou winn'st—the tongue is kind—
Not that doth give thee joy—but wish thee dead!
The keeper, not the owner of a thing
Wherein is lock'd thy life, and thy life's gems—
Thy peace and honour dear!

Eust. Won such a maid
Thy love?

Wal. Not such a maid! No! No! she lived
Forbid to all but me. The statue's ear
And eye, you'd think, as much perception had
Of wonder at the consummate chisel's skill,
As hers of praise from others' eyes and tongues.
But, oh! at lightest glance or sound of mine,
How would the rich and fair-wrought marble glow!

Eust. Thou mourn'st her dead, then?

Wal. Dead?—Ay, dead! a corpse,
A mouldering corpse, that's with corruption housed,
Which skill medicinal can ne'er restore
To its sweet life again!—the which to weep
Is all that fondest eyes may look for, now;
The life, alas! of her fair honour's gone!

Eust. What! lived she but for thee, and gave she up
Her richest jewel to another?

Wal. You
Shall hear my story. What in form she was,

I will not paint to you.—Each lover has,
 You know, the fairest she—say, mine's a paragon
 As much as thine; yet, of the very charm
 That's crest of all, thou wilt but make a seat
 To mount some plume of hers, whom thou affect'st,
 That shall transcend it far! I know it—so
 Forbear. Yet had you e'er set eyes upon her!
 Alas! she stood alone! To truest hearts
 The sight of her was wonderful estrangement,
 Weaning them for a time from things, howe'er
 Clung dotingly to before—that mistresses
 Have sadden'd to see eyes, that blazed on them
 Ere they were turn'd away, turn back again
 Listless and icy cold! Riches and rank,
 Bestudded o'er and gilded, have look'd blank
 To see themselves outshone without a gem!
 Nay, very hostesses, whose only care
 Was to behold their costly huswifery
 Approved, have been discomfited to see
 Their tables crown'd as ne'er they were before,
 And she the only garnish of the board!

Eust. Fancied you not that others saw like you?

Wal. No! no! I saw they did—I felt they did—
 Felt it through many a pang of doubt—but not
 Through fear of her demerits, but my own!

Eust. Ne'er gave she cause to doubt?

Wal. No!

Eust. Still she fail'd?

Wal. As life—when health, that is the heart of life,
 Seems sound to the very core!—has ne'er given sign
 Of flaw or speck—this moment in the bloom—
 The next, is blasted!

Eust. What you so assert,
 The more that you assert, the more I doubt!
 What! truth to falsehood in a moment turn?
 Virtue to vice? Love to estrangement? Love!
 And in a woman! Had she loved before?

Wal. No!

Eust. Her first love, too!—But she was a child?

Wal. No; in the blush of bursting womanhood.

Eust. And left thee for another? No declining
 Of that first passion? Never seen to wane
 A little now—now more? but all at once
 Go out! Impossible! You've been deceived!
 Abused! you have! my life, my soul upon it!

Wal. They're costly pledges to be forfeited;
 Then risk them not!

Eust. What canst thou set against them?

Wal. Proofs! facts!

Eust. Facts?

Wal. Facts! *My* cause thou wast engaged in?
 How is't I find thee in another's listed?

Eust. Whose is the cause of her thou lov'st, but thine?

Wal. Not if she's false.

Eust. But if she's true?

Wal. She's not!

By truth, she's not!

Eust. By truth, she *is*!—unless,
Things, coinciding just as much as the East
And West—high Heaven and the Abyss—noonday
And midnight—reason and madness—contraries
Confess'd and palpable—for so opposed,
I own, do your averments seem to me—
You prove to be identical.

Wal. Listen, then!

Who wins a prize, thou know'st wins envy too.
With such a prize thou wilt not wonder then
That many grudged my fortune! 'Mong the rest
Was one, a satire on the saucy code
That makes the wreath of merit, birth-right, when
No law can make the grace that wins it so!
This titled profligate alone, no check,
Reverse, rebuke, rejection, could divert
From pressing still his suit: my arm had tried it,
But that she hung upon it, minding me
The life I'd peril was the heart of hers!
She did!—and for enforcement show'd to me
Vouchers on vouchers—genuine sighs and tears!
Art couldn't feign such—I'll do justice to her—
She then was true—as true as haggard since!
Why weep'st thou?

Eust. Thou dost weep; and tears draw tears,
When grief itself will fail.

Wal. Then dry your eyes;
You'll ne'er see mine again! you think me lost
To honour?

Eust. No!

Wal. What! not to weep a wanton?

Eust. O, not a wanton!

Wal. How!

Eust. Not *then* a wanton!

Wal. Not then! The devil was once an angel—what
Of that? He fell!—who weeps him? no one! What
Though she was once a spirit of light, as he was,
When now she's black as he?

Eust. Nay!

Wal. Doubt it not!

To cavil at the right we feel to writhe,
Is aggravation, that adds wrong to wrong,
And drives before-o'erburthen'd patience mad!
The sun itself stared on it!—'twas not lewdness
Chamber'd—behind the curtain—'Twas i' the street,
Light as noonday could make it!—without cloak!
Hood!—veil!—Now call it questionable! Nothing

To mask the wanton!—Oh! for a thunderbolt,
To strike me then!—from a noted, libell'd stew,
Led by the noble libertine—his trophy,
Worn on his arm, in the gaze of every eye—
I saw her issue.

Eust. Did she shun thee?

Wal. No!

Eust. That was a proof of innocence.

Wal. Of guilt!

Rank! rank!—a sudden and entire infection,
A touch and rottenness; as from the bite
Of a serpent, in an instant, ruddy life
To black corruption grows! Why should she shun me?
She had her tale at hand! 'Twas but to make
Her paramour her friend; their assignation
A freak of chance; her reconciliation to
A man she loath'd before, a debt; and for
That debt assign a cause equivalent;—
All which she did in a breath! 'Twas clear, sir; clear!
The truth spoke for itself! Fact built of fact—
Nought out of place or disproportionate!
As obviously *that* followed *this*; *this*, *that*!
As this doth chime with this, and that with that!
A thing one must believe!—from end to end,
A lie, sir!—He had saved her from a villain!
The villain!—when she appeal'd to him, he'd damn her!
“He fain would bear her out! His life was hers!—
“His fortune—but upon a point of honour—
“In question with a man of honour—not
“That he denied her fair averments though—
“He pray'd she would excuse him!”

Eust. You believed him!

Him you believed, that ne'er was true before!

Her disbelieved, was ne'er before but true?

Wal. Herself admitted it.

Eust. How?

Wal. By damning silence!

Eust. Is't guilt alone, convicted, that keeps silence?

Guilt—saucy guilt—that dares to break the law
Of God and man! Remember you no case,
Where innocence accused hath all at once
Been stricken dumb?—appall'd to undergo
The charge of sin, that never could endure
The thought of sin?—appearances against her,
And witness for her none, but her own heart?
Her very blood betraying her, deserting
Its post upon her cheek, whence, were it bold
As honest, 'fore a host 'twould ne'er give way!
Remember you no case like this? or if
Your memory none records, is such a one
So much at odds with probability,
Your fancy cannot image it? A woman.

Young, charily brought up, as vestal for
The fane!—suppose a novice, so sincere,
She loved and knew it not, till, by its signs,
Others more skill'd find out the passion for her,
And told her that she loved!

Wal. Thou draw'st herself!

Eust. And such a one, by accident or plot,
Sudden to stand in such predicament
As of her honour valid question founded—
In presence too of him whose value for
The gem had made it doubly, trebly dear—
And then, appealing to a villain's truth,
To find the tongue should clear, but blurr'd her more!—
Oh! I would ask for signs of life as soon
From lips of stone, as look for words from hers!
She couldn't speak!—Speak? breathe! she would be stunn'd
To utter lapse of every sense, except
That at her heart, which told it at that hour
It would be bliss to break! Should she be true
At last——

Wal. No more of this!

Eust. Have I not shaken—

Not much, but somewhat—say, a little—say,
A very little—your belief of her
Dishonour?

Wal. Speak not of her.

Eust. If she is pure,

Despite appearances, as first you thought her;
Constant, despite desertion; and despite
Wrongs, scornings, brandings, fond;—it may be fonder—
For woman's love's a plant, I've often heard,
Which mocketh all that thrive in winter time,
Not only keeping green, but growing then.

Wal. You take, methinks, strange interest in her fate!

Eust. I have a friend, whose fate resembles hers—

Whose cause I'm sworn to right! Besides, we're friends.
Thou art not happy?

Wal. No.

Eust. I would see thee so.

To have thee so, I'd wish thee in the wrong.
She's not forgotten—is she?

Wal. Would she were!

Eust. Perhaps thou lov'st her still?

Wal. To madness! There's

My malady. I love her—not what she is,
But what she was! What's present—that's her swerving,
That's palpable, which you may see, touch, handle,
Define, weigh, prove by any test is real—
Feels but a phantasm, a conceit, a dream—
A horrible one!—in contrast with what's past,
Her worth, her love, her constancy, that vanish'd
Or e'er you question'd them.

Eust. Art sure of that?
Come, come, thou'rt not, at least, thou'rt not *quite* sure.
Now did she stand before thee undismay'd
Confiding in thy honour—say thy patience—
Say thy endurance——

Wal. If my eyes could look
The mandate of my soul, they would flash lightning on her.
To blast her where she stood! What ails thee?

Eust. Nought—
What did I do? How did I look? What saw'st,
To ask? Did I turn pale, or start, or what?
Do I tremble? Feel!—I am past fear, grief, pain,
As death! Give me thy arm, and come with me.
I'll show thee what a piece of rock thou thought'st
Was quaking. Thou a false woman, as thou think'st her,
Wouldst revenge—I would revenge a woman wrong'd!
Bitterly wrong'd! so wrong'd, that after her
None should complain of hardship! Come! and see,
Which holds his purpose most tenaciously. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in HERO'S House at Greenwich.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE and CLEVER.

Sir Val. I tell thee, I must see her!

Clever. Friend, thy face,
Albeit no modest one, thy deeds outdo
In forwardness! I brought thee but to see
The maiden's house—and thou wouldst enter it!
Nor therewith rest'st content—but must have speech
With her that owns it, and escheweth thee,
As all ungodly things!

Sir Val. And I will have it!
So tell thyself—but gently say to her,
A stranger craveth audience. Mind—a stranger.
And do my bidding; else I may forget
Thou art a man of peace, and, may be, beat thee.
Yea—beat thee—I repeat it! and, I pray thee,
Make me not do't again!

Clever. I will submit—
Ere I will use the argument o' th' flesh,
For that would hurt my spirit. Umph! I am gone!
[*Goes out.*]

Sir Val. So far, so well! Admittance I have gain'd,
And now an audience wait—but doubtingly.
Her cousin?—then behoves me change my name,
Else, knowing me for Hero's suitor, she
May spurn me. Yes! I'll even call myself
Sir Launcelot de Vere.—Can this be she?
The knave has mock'd me—and the world of hopes
That sudden rose to my imagining,

Melts into nothing.—Stay!—It forms again!
 It grows to probability.—No vapour
 That takes a passing form!—is here and gone!
 But a sincere and palpable creation!
 Another Hero is there—or I see
 The same!—Oh, likeness at beholding, e'en,
 Incredible!—that makes with wonderment
 The vision waver, and the utterance fail!

Enter HERO (disguised as before).

Hero. Well? What's your will?

Sir Val. Forgive me, lady, if
 With occupation of mine eyes, awhile
 I thus forget the office of my tongue
 To give thee 'custom'd salutation! Still—
 Still would I gaze, nor speak! Art what thou seem'st?

Hero. What seem I, friend?

Sir Val. Likeness—unlikeness! A thing
 Most different—and yet the very same!
 What I would give averment of, most strong—
 Again most strong deny! The form of the bane,
 With the sweet virtue of the antidote!
 The rose, was canker'd yesterday, to-day
 Freshness and soundness to the very core!
 O beauty conscious of its proper pride!
 That nothing deigns to ask, to set it off,
 Except simplicity, that offers nought,
 Yet all that's due performs! I have not lived
 Till now!—I have but dealt with shows of life,
 Automaton, that do not know themselves,
 But act from causes, are no part of them!
 But here is nature's mechanism—mind
 And soul—a body fitting them, informing
 With motions of their own.

Hero. Friend, art thou mad?

Sir Val. Mad, lady?

Hero. Rational, thou canst not be!

Sir Val. Not rational?

Hero. If that—which much I doubt—
 Certain, not favour'd with the grace of truth.

Sir Val. Doubt'st thou I utter aught but truth?

Hero. I doubt

Thy wits, thy wisdom, or thy truth. Not mad,
 Thou art not wise—if wise, thou speak'st not truth.
 And sooth to say, thy dress of vanity,
 Thy looks of wildness, and thy air, assured,
 Where one who knew propriety would feel
 Disturbance—this abrupt intrusion, which
 Nor leave, nor introduction, nor acquaintance
 Can justify—approve thee void of truth,
 Unwise, or mad!—if none of these, a man
 Of cloddish nature, base and ignorant!

Sir Val. Oh! say not cloddish nature! Say not base,
 Nor ignorant! It is the dignity
 Of man, that the bright stars invite his mind
 To soar the empyrean where they sit,
 Placed infinite beyond terrestrial reach;
 And scan their uses and their essences,—
 High argument of his affinity
 To him that made them, and the immortal light
 That shall outlast this filmy, shadowy sphere
 Whereon they look and smile! 'Twas told to me
 That thou wast perfect fair—I doubted that,
 For I had found, methought, the paragon
 Of beauty's wealth in woman! then 'twas said
 That thou wast wise—I wish'd thee that, for still,
 Though oft at fault, in noble house I've lodged
 Noble inhabitant! 'Twas said again
 That thou wast good—then I believed thee wise,
 For wisdom should bear goodness, or no fruit!
 And good and wise, believed thee fairest too,
 And coveted! Nor come I without leave—
 Thy simple life, eschewing worldly forms,
 Was pledge for leave! Nor lack I introduction,
 That honest errand bring to vouch for me.
 Nor, least of all, acquaintance—I have known thee
 Since matured thought, my nature's fondest wish
 Informing, told it loveliness of soul,
 Yet more than that of body, forms the woman,
 And, therewith when abiding, makes full up
 The highest worth that excellence on earth
 Amounts to—nearest what we hope in Heaven

Hero. Friend, dost thou know thou talkest to a worm?

Sir Val. A worm!

Hero. A mite?

Sir Val. A mite!

Hero. Nor yet a mite—

A congregate of evils, whereunto
 The worm and mite are strangers?

Sir Val. Evils!

Hero. Know'st not

That beauty will take cold?—will have the tooth-ache?
 Will catch a fever?—that its peachy cheek
 Will canker in a night?—that its sweet lips,
 Palace of smiles, spasm will compel to change
 Their garish tenants for uncouth contortions?
 That its fair dress of pride—its velvet skin—
 Humours will spot, discolour?—that, in brief,
 It is a thing in value vanishing
 As fickle merchandise, which rates to-day
 Enormously—the next, may go a-begging?
 And, worse than all, that its chief merit lies
 In wishing, not possessing?—coveted,
 Of purchase measureless—obtain'd, worth nothing!

Sir Val. Thou mean'st the beauty that but meets the eye?

Hero. I mean the beauty thou alone canst see,
And provest thou only see'st. Why, what pains
Thou takest with a common piece of clay
To set it off! A fine account to turn
The bow of God to—meant for spiritual,
And not corporeal use—with divers tints
To clothe thy body! besides lading it
With the mine's produce—gems and metals—proof
Far more *without* concerns thee than *within*!
Oh! that a nature, of immortal reach,
Should house its aspirations in a crib
Like this poor tiny world! and, taught to look
Above the coronets of the fair stars;
Go proud with grains of dust and gossamer,
The property of things inferior to him,
As motes unto the sun! But I forget—Thy errand?

Sir Val. Love!

Hero. 'Tis clear, thou'rt mad! What! love
Whom ne'er thou saw'st before!

Sir Val. Nay, pardon me,
And let thy patience lend me audience, while
I show thee my credentials, on the faith
Of which I come. I have seen thee very oft.

Hero. Stark mad!

Sir Val. Nay, rational—as rational
As reason in its soberest, perfect mood—
Held converse with thee, countless times.

Hero. Broke loose
From Bedlam!

Sir Val. Walk'd and sat with thee.

Hero. I trust
Thy keeper is at hand!

Sir Val. He came with me.

Hero. Where is he?

Sir Val. Here, although thou see'st him not.
My keeper's Love. I have woo'd thee for a month!

Hero. Hoa! help!

Sir Val. Be not alarm'd.

Hero. Nay, touch me not!
When didst thou break thy chains?

Sir Val. I wear them yet;
The subtle ones that self-same beauty forged,
Which now I look upon—most gorgeous dress,
But by another worn.

Hero. Oh! you have loved
One that resembles me.

Sir Val. I have.

Hero. 'Tis not
A fit, then?

Sir Val. No; for fits are vanishing.
This is a mood like nature's; lasts for life'

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Why didst thou call? I heard thy voice, in fear.

Hero. All's well, good Obadiah.

Clever. Is it so?

Then I may go again. Young man, beware
Thou frighten'st not the maiden. We are meek,
And offer not offence; but meeting it,
As injury will make the worm rebel,
We turn, and we are strong—yea, very strong!—
Whose wrath, albeit a pebble, hath avail
To smite a giant!—therefore, tempt it not!
Umph!

[*Goes out.*]

Hero. Thou hast known a maiden like me?

Sir Val. Yes;

I have loved a maid, most like thee—most unlike;
Without, as costly,—but within, as poor
To thee, as penury to affluence.

Hero. And didst thou love and woo her for a month,
And a defaulter, thus? 'Twas grievous lack
Of penetration.

Sir Val. Nay, 'twas specious show
That valid credit won.

Hero. Thou art a man
Like all thy worldly class, of shallow mind.
Thy heart is in thine eyes! What pleaseth them,
Is sure of that.

Sir Val. Nay, I had then loved on.

Hero. What cured thy love?

Sir Val. I saw her in a dance
Light nature show.

Hero. A dance! Oh! I have heard
Of such a thing. An idle pastime! What
But folly comes of folly? Do you dance?

Sir Val. I do.

Hero. What kind of a thing is it? Come, show me!

Sir Val. I pray you to excuse me.

Hero. Nay, but dance.

Sir Val. I pray you, ask me not.

Hero. Thou dancest badly?

Sir Val. Nay, I have won some credit in the dance.

Hero. Then do the thing thou hast won credit by.

Sir Val. I cannot.

Hero. Friend, thou art ashamed to dance.

Sir Val. Nay, not ashamed.

Hero. Then dance!

Sir Val. 'Twere out of time
And place.

Hero. What, out of time and place, and to
A man of gallantry, to do the thing
A lady wishes him; and he the while
On sufferance in her presence! I perceive!

Thou art in a grave mood, and for a man to dance,
 And look like Solomon, I must suppose
 Were more offence to seriousness, than were
 A cap and bells. Friend, it is very clear
 Thou canst not dance, and look like a wise man—
 Yet thou woo'dst a lady, thou saidst,
 And cast her off, because she did not dance
 With gravity!

Sir Val. She danced with lightness more
 Than lightest measure warranted. No thing
 A modest woman does—say that it touches
 The utmost verge of license—but that cincture,
 Of better proof than zone of adamant,
 Its holy and offence-repelling fires,
 Keeps waving round her, that the libertine,
 Unwon by honour, yet is tamed by awe!
 She danced to gladden eyes, whose burning glances
 Turn thoughts of honest men on flashing swords,
 On flame at stains wash'd out alone by blood!
 The empire of her beauty gave a prey
 To parasites, who love for their own ends,
 And by their homage shame!

Hero. We have talk'd enough.

Sir Val. Your pardon! Yet, we have not talk'd at all—
 The errand yet untold, that brought me here—
 I would have leave to woo thee.

Hero. Thou!—a man
 Of the vain world!

Sir Val. Nay, of no world but thine!

Hero. Thou of *my* world! How comest thou by these gauds—
 Lace, ribbons, tinsel, trinkets, slashes—not
 To name that most egregious vanity
 Thou mountest in thy cap, and the poor bird
 It was purloin'd from wore for use, not show!—
 Rebuke and lesson to its wiser lord!
 There's not a portion of thee but bespeaks
 Ransacking of the earth and sea—and all
 To recommend thee unto eyes, whose owners,
 Be they the homeliest, behold thy betters
 In their own mirrors.

Sir Val. I will dress to please
 The eyes of none but thee.

Hero. Thou shouldst be rich—
 Too rich for modest happiness, and all
 Beyond is but the name! Riches are bars
 Prevent us enter Heaven; how, then, be doors
 On earth to admit us unto aught of Heaven?
 How many hundreds brings thy rental in?

Sir Val. As many as make up a thousand pounds
 To welcome every quarter.

Hero. Poor young man!
 How much I pity thee!

Sir Val. I will reduce
My revenue.

Hero. Canst thou reduce the wants
Thy revenue hath gender'd—foes to thee,
Under the masques of friends?

Sir Val. My every want
Is now summ'd up in one.

Hero. Hast thou a title?
How art thou named?

Sir Val. Sir Launcelot de Vere.

Hero. How wouldst thou bear be call'd plain Launcelot?
Thou wouldst not know thyself! *We* have no titles.
Names, being of themselves no part of us,
We only value as distinguishing
One from another. Stephen, Ephraim,
John, Obadiah, Solomon, suffice.
All adjuncts else, as Mist'ers, Sirs, Earls, Dukes,
We estimate as superfluities.

Sir Launcelot de Vere! I neither like
Title nor Christian name. More proper far
Would Peter fit—or Mark, or John, or Luke,
Or Nicodemus—names of men of peace,
And sounding passing sweet!

Sir Val. The name is mine
Thou givest me.

Hero. So thou believest now;
To-morrow, thou wilt be the former man.
Nor must I longer talk with thee; for sweet
I own the proffer of thy duty comes,
Although by me received mistrustingly.
Persist not, friend, or I may wholly doubt
What half I would believe;—which, if indeed
Thou mean'st—and, here, the frankness of a maid
Hath overshot her coyness—thou canst prove
Hath matter weightier than airy words.
Farewell! What shall I call thee?

Sir Val. Launcelot.

Hero. So soon forgot.

Sir Val. Mark, Obadiah, Job,
Peter, or—or—I lack the other names.

Hero. No matter! These are grateful as the rest,
Nor 'mongst them Peter least! What a sweet name
Is Peter!—I will call thee Peter, though
It be for the last time. [*Sighs.*] Farewell, friend Peter.

Sir Val. Stay! How may I call thee?

Hero. Say, Ruth.

Sir Val. Farewell,
Fair Ruth!

Hero. Fair Ruth! So soon forgot again!
Friend Ruth, thou ought'st to say.

Sir Val. Friend Ruth, farewell!

And yet another word! Have I thy leave
To come to thee again?

Hero. That must depend
On *how* thou com'st.

Sir Val. Then sure I come again!
Friend Ruth!

Hero. Friend Peter?

Sir Val. May we not shake hands?

Hero. That must depend on how thou shakest hands.

Sir Val. Why, how should I shake hands?

Hero. Why, soberly.

Sir Val. Then soberly, friend Ruth, shake hands with me.

Hero. There, that is long enough!

Sir Val. One more word yet—

Friend Ruth, may I not kiss thy hand?

Hero. Friend Peter!

Sir Val. I'll kiss it soberly—yea, soberly.

Farewell—once more—farewell!—One more.—It is
A banquet, gathers appetite. [*Kissing her hand.*]

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Young man,
What dost thou?

Sir Val. Nothing.

Clever. Yea, a thing that vexes
The spirit of the maiden, and to mine
Gives much disturbance—yea, a forward thing,
Abomination to the faithful—yea,
Abomination.—Go! [*Placing himself between them.*]

Sir Val. Farewell!

Clever. Avaunt!

Such things become not eyes like hers or mine
To look upon.—Avoid!

Sir Val. Farewell! I'll come
Again!

Hero. Then come with more discretion, friend.

Clever. Thou hear'st—avoid! Remove thee hence! Be-
gone!

Make not a crook, friend, of thy body—say
Farewell—do nothing more—and go!

Sir Val. Farewell!

Hero. Farewell!

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Park.**Enter* LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON.

Ath. Yes ; I desired him to attend me here.
Behoves my door and he be strangers, lest
Our practices be traced. Want dogs him still,
And fits him for my purpose, by the threat
Of her pernicious tooth. Yet there's a weakness,
I would he had not. Much he loves his child ;
Which shows his nature is not callous all ;
Whence oftentimes I dread some start of ruth.
But finds he out fair Hero's close retreat,
The meagre knave shall fatten. Soft ! he's here—
Well, have you traced her ?

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Yes ; she is at Greenwich,
Where I and mine abide and famish.

Ath. Fool !

Not to have guess'd as much, and know she hath
A villa there. Resides she by herself ?

Lew. She does.

Ath. Then is she mine. Canst thou obtain
Secret admission ?

Lew. Easily, my lord ;
Into her chamber-window, which looks out
Upon her garden.

Ath. It must be done to-night.*Lew.* Most strangely is she changed.*Ath.* How ?

Lew. In her dress,
That's now the fashion of that formal sect,
Which at all worldly modes exception takes.

Ath. Indeed ! some plot's on foot, and must concern
Her quarrel with Sir Valentine. To-night,
She gives me lodging. Stay—we must proceed
With such exactitude, the sun and dial
Shall vary soon as we ! I'll write it down. [*Writes.*
'Sdeath ! I must change a word ! I'll write it o'er
Again, that thou mayst have no scratch to hang
Excuse for failure on. There. Be observant
To the syllable. Away ! 'Thy greatest hire,
For former service, I will double for thee,
Succeed'st thou but in this.

Lew. Misgive not, sir ;
I never yet have fail'd you. But, so please you,
Some present prompt supply. My children starve !

My wife, to find them half a meal a day,
Hath worn herself to skin and bone, and now
Can drag her limbs no more to forage for them.
Their pressing need relieve, and do with me
Whate'er thou wilt.

Ath. There!

Lew. All is noted here,
Behoveth me to heed?

Ath. No jot forgot.
I may rely upon thee?

Lew. As on one
Whose life is in thy hands.

[*Goes out.*]

Ath. The cards come round.

Fel. I pray you, what intend you?

Ath. He obtains
Admittance; I am on the watch, without;
She is alarm'd; I hear her cry for help;
And to her rescue naturally come.
I enter how I can, and once within,
Shape as I may the rest—assured of this,
She will accept protection; giving which,
I cast what colour on the case I please,
Insuring payment full!

Fel. Thou art the prince
Of plotters!

Ath. Thou art no less royal, there.
So hold we charge of one another's secrets,
Neither is like to break.

Enter EUSTACE and WALSINGHAM

Eust. Lord Athunree,
I here accuse thee of a murder! and
Will undertake to justify myself,
At the point of the sword. Hast thou the courage to
Abide the trial, whereunto I, now,
Demand of thee, thou fixest time and place,
For thy defence? Lo, I repeat the charge
And challenge too—Thou art a murderer!
And I demand thou pay the penalty,
Which if I prove defaulter in exacting,
I am content to leaguer my own life.
For the third time, I charge thee with the deed!—
Of felony more capital accuse thee
Than ever caitiff on the scaffold paid
The forfeit of! A murder,—cowardly!
Unparallel'd!—past human nature savage!
Wilt thou confront me?—Wilt thou? Canst thou? Darest
thou?

Ath. Doubt'st thou my answer prompt as thy demand?

Eust. Give it, and leave not room for question! Where,
And when, shall we the mortal issue try?

Ath. To-morrow!—Stay!—that gentleman thy friend?

Eust. He is.

Ath. He passes then as voucher for thee.
Yet I'll prevent miscarriage in the thing
Thy heart so earnestly is bent upon,
To its deep cost, I fear. There time and place
You see are written down.

[Writes on the back of the paper he had first written upon.]

Eust. For this I thank you;
That I may thoroughly be quits with you,
And all the payment on thy side be due.

Ath. Farewell! Thou art young, but yet more rash than young!

Eust. I am not rash, but by reflection act
As I do now, with hope my arm will prove
Stanch as my tongue. Thou art a murderer!

[LORD ATHUNTREE and FELTON go out.]

Wal. My fellow-student! Wonder hitherto
Hath tied my tongue! Has he a wrong with thee
To settle too?

Eust. He has! Let's see what time and place
He hath appointed? Ha! what's here?
Oh, Providence is here! *[Aside.]* A plot to ensnare,
In helpless ruin like to mine, the heart
In girlhood still was nearest to my own.
Then must I see thee, Hero! Pride must now
Give way to love! Occasion calls me hence,
More urgent yet than that which brought me hither.
Nor must we go together. Question, not;
But, at our place of practice, give me meeting
An hour at least ere noon.

Wal. I shall not fail.

[Goes out.]

Eust. Oh, what a case is mine, to wear the brand
I never merited!—to be denounced
The child of guilt, that am the daughter free—
Except the primal all-referring lapse—
Of innocence! To be amerced of that,
The loss of which might make offence a thing
To be commiserated more than blamed—
For nothing!—So!—Inconstant to him!—So!—
A wanton!—So!—The framer of a lie!—
He loves me still! I pardon all for that!
For that his tongue shall rail at me again—
Pronounce me faithless—liar—wanton—aught!
Aught that I am not, for the blessed AM
That still assures him mine! Oh, I but play
A novel part! A solitary maid,
Herself to vindicate her injured name!
No father, brother, friend to plead the cause
Of her wrong'd honour, and her baffled love!
No champion left her but a woman's arm
Back'd by a woman's heart!—yet, trusting these,

And to just Heaven appealing, resolute
 For life or death to meet the mortal strife!—
 But where is Hero? Does thy friend forget thee,
 And thou in peril? No! She flies to save thee. [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in Hero's House at Greenwich.*

Enter HERO.

Hero. My game the more I play successfully,
 The less my eagerness to win it grows.
 'Tis all but mine, yet thought of victory
 Sits at my heart so heavy; for defeat
 To turn up now were respite to me! respite!
 False gains are poor possessions, bringing not
 Content—the touchstone of true happiness!
 And yet I punish him! For what? for right?
 Retaliation of offended wrong!
 And yet he bears me beyond patience, hard.
 At once to throw off duty! and my slave
 To start up my dictator, that ne'er yet
 Met bended brow of man—in presence too
 Where vassal homage had awaited me!
 He should be made to bow! and once become
 My thorough captive, spurns for spurning take!
 Yet doth he raise himself, by those high thoughts
 He breathes of zeal and honour for my sex,
 The while I sink as coming short thereof!
 With this regard I fail. I must see nought
 Except my purpose—by the dread of loss
 Yet to enhance my value in his eyes,
 Propound my terms, and to the issue come
 That shows *him* foil'd, and *me* the conqueror!

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Ma'm, he is come!

Hero. Then show him in, and mind
 What we arranged, touching those friends of mine
 I am to summon from the other room. [*CLEVER goes out.*]
 How shall I struggle through the race, wherein
 I gasp at setting out!

Enter CLEVER, showing in SIR VALENTINE.

Clever. Here is the man
 That wants to speak with thee—be careful, for
 I like his habit better than his looks.
 He minds me of some child of Satan, who
 My spirit hath offended—Watch him, Ruth,
 And advertise me if he troubleth thee. [*Goes out.*]

Hero. Thy business, friend?

Sir Val. Dost thou not know it?

Hero. Yea!

If fits thy purpose, friend, thy habit; grave
And goodly must it be—what is its shape?
Instruction or admonishment, or what?
Unfold thee! Be it righteous and discreet,
I'll hear it as an humble sister ought.

Sir Val. Dost thou not know me?

Hero. Yea! that thou art one
Amongst the faithful—but I know not who
That one may be.

Sir Val. Not know me, sister Ruth?

Hero. Oh! is it you, friend Peter, come again
Into a new man changed!

Sir Val. So changed for thee!

My fortune I've reduced. Made o'er to thee
For purposes of heavenly charity!

Hero. Made o'er thy fortune? Could I this believe?

[*Aside.*

Sir Val. My thousands, lady, have since yesterday
To hundreds dwindled, at thy will. If that
Contents thee not, but still I seem too rich,
Say but the word, the hundreds shrink to tens—
The tens to units—these again to nought,
That my fond love may win most rich reward.

Hero. I dream'd not of such love!

[*Aside.*

Sir Val. My title gone.

Hero. Thy title gone!

Sir Val. Had it been costlier,
More readily it had been thrown away,
As to thy wish, whereto it gave offence,
A meeter sacrifice! Plain gentleman
Is all they rate me now! if that's too high,
I'll be plain yeoman, for thy gentle sake;
If that, low hind! aught lady, aught! to please
The wise desires, are guardians to thy love!

Hero. His title likewise gone! I have o'ershot
My mark! I'll stop!—Too late—I must go on!—
Thy work's not yet complete. Our sect, thou know'st,
Prohibits marriage, save amongst its own;
To number thee with whom, if thou inclinest
To recommend thee, it behoves thee win
Some brother's, sister's, word—such are at hand—
Wilt thou submit thee to their scrutiny?

Sir Val. At once!

Hero. But mind, whate'er they may remark,
Thou takest in silence—even in good part.
It will be scandal to me else, because
Of entertaining thee.

Sir Val. Thy will's my law.

[*HERO rings.*

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Hath he misdona? Am I to put him forth?

Hero. No; brother Ephraim I wish to see,
And with him sister Grace.

Clever. They saw the man
Ascend the steps, and when he was let in,
They oped the door themselves, and vanished!
Thereto advised by his forbidding looks.
Friend Ruth, he's poison to thee. Yesterday
I lost much grace accompanying him
From London unto Greenwich, so he vex'd
My spirit by the lightness of his gait,
And mortified me, as he drew the eyes
Of flaunting damsels on him! To reform him
Is hopeless, for the more that I admonish'd,
The more did he offend; till scandalized
Beyond endurance e'en of my meek spirit,
I waver'd between option to stand still
And let him on alone, or run and leave him.
Observe moreover he's a man of wrath,—
Look at him! He could eat me up—yea, eat me
Like to a ravening lion a poor lamb!
Ne'er judged I looks of man—if inwardly
He does not bite his lips! Be sure he swears!
Yea, he blasphemeth!—Get him from thy doors!
Eject him from them! Into the highway with him!
Heed not if night or day—in sun or rain—
Or lose thy place among the faithful, Ruth!
Umph!

[Goes out.]

Hero. They reject thee—yea, thou see'st they do!
Yea, they reject thee!

Sir Val. Do not thou the same!
Oh, let me talk to thee in my soul's speech—
List! I have staked my life on winning thee!
Not in my own breath, but in thine I live!
My portion in the sun, the earth, and all
The affluence from their copartnery
Derived, I have made o'er to thee, nor now
Except by thy vouchsafing can enjoy!
Am I to live or die? Nay, think before
Thou speak'st, and those fair thoughts to council call,
Yet richer than the sumptuous palace which
They make their proud sojourn! So like to Heaven,
Hast not its ruth, that makes us daily bless
Its governance? Thou hast!—and as thou hast,
Let it beam down its influence on me,
And save thy worshipper! Thou lett'st me kneel—
Sure then—O! sure I do not kneel in vain.

Hero. Rise up! These proofs of honest passion quite
Confound me.

[Aside.]

Sir Val. Hear me! O, the world! the world,
That's made up of two hearts! That is the sun
It moves around! There is the verdure! There
The flower! the fruit! The spring and autumn field,

Which in the reaping grows! the mine that, work'd,
Accumulates in riches—ever free
From influences of the changing stars,
Or aught, save that which sits above them higher
Than they above the globe!—Come! make with me
E'en such a heavenly world.

Hero. Beseech thee, rise!

Sir Val. In hope?

Hero. In hope! What did I say?

Sir Val. Thou saidst—

Thou badest me rise in hope. [*Rises.*] Thy heart is moved.

Hero. 'Tis touch'd.

Sir Val. And nothing more?

Hero. Perhaps a little.

Sir Val. How may I call that little? what's its name—
If haply of the kind I'd have it be,

'Gainst all I've thrown away, and ten times more,

I'd set it—Lady, tell me, what's its name?

Oh, deal magnanimously with me, nor

What 'tis not wrong to feel, when *thou* canst feel it,

Believe 'tis wrong to speak! Frankly! couldst love me?

Hero. Frankly, I could.

Sir Val. Once more, be frank—and dost thou?

Hero. Frankly, I do.

Sir Val. I said, "once more be frank,"—
Yet must I say once more be frank again.

Hero. And if thou dost, I will be frank again.

Sir Val. Wilt take me for thy husband?

Hero. There's my hand,

If no impediment forbids thee, clasp it.

Sir Val. None.

Hero. Soft—I'll do it! 'Twill be a sweet revenge! [*Aside.*
A thought has struck me. Thou hast loved a damsel,

My likeness it should seem—and one know I,

Who, to the vision, so resembles me,

In her I see myself; nor can the ear

That hears us, well determine which is which,

In pitch and tone our voices so are one.

The damsel thou affectedst may be she—

Her name is Hero Sutton.

Sir Val. 'Tis the same.

Hero. Another thought now strikes me. Is the name
Thou gavest to me thy real one? Alas!

Thy colour mounteth! It is clear! Thou art

Sir Valentine de Grey? Alas! alas!

Your leave to be alone!

Sir Val. Are you not well?

Hero. O, yes; I'm very well. Good e'en! Quite well!

Well as a woman can be, when she finds,

Too late, she rashly gave her heart away

To one, whose value for the gift will be,

Soon as he proves 'tis his, to bid her keep it.

Sir Val. To bid her keep it !

Hero. As Hero Sutton rues !

Sir Val. She never gave
Her heart to me !

Hero. She did ! you know not when
A woman gives away her heart ! At times
She knows it not herself ! Insensibly
It goes from her ! She thinks she hath it still—
If she reflects—while smoothly runs the course
Of wooing ; but if haply comes a check—
An irrecoverable—final one—
Aghast—forlorn—she starts, to find it lost,
And with it, all the world !

Sir Val. No maid could love,
And act as she.

Hero. How did she act ?

Sir Val. I told thee.
She danced to please a libertine, and pain
A man of honour—one who worshipp'd her.

Hero. She danced to please no man but thee ! Your
eyes,

She thought upon her, did alone inspire her
In the measure. Thorough conquest of the heart,
She thought was all *but* hers, she hoped to make ;
And so, with all her soul endeavouring,
She lost it all, and with it all herself !

Sir Val. If she had told me this—

Hero. If she had told !
When, pray thee ?—where ? or how ?—didst name a place,
Or time, to hear her vindicate herself ?
Didst even hint it to her ? In a breath,
You doubted, tried, condemn'd, and sentenced ; nor
'Fore witnesses didst pity her to spare her !
They should beware, who charges lay in love,
On solid grounds they make them ! for, there are hearts
So proudly fond, that, wrong them, there, they'll break
Or ever they will stoop to right themselves.
Much such a one is hers ; and yet, with all
Her pride—for strong as that, more strong her love—
She trusts to win thee still.

Sir Val. To win me still !
She gave me up, without a sigh or word.

Hero. So had I given thee up, had I been she—
And yet I love thee.

Sir Val. See me at thy feet !

Hero. I can't, with thought how thou hast knelt at hers.

Sir Val. Nay, hear me, but in pity.

Hero. She in pity
Heard thee ! and much it profited her !—much !
She now, it seems, may sue !

Sir Val. I swear to thee
Eternal constancy !

Hero. Thy witnesses,
Thy oaths to her!

Sir Val. Where are the smiles just now
That beam'd upon me?

Hero. Quench'd by Hero's tears.

Sir Val. By Hero's tears! She never wept for me!

Hero. She show'd thee not her tears; but what of that?
Her eyes might rain, and thou not see a drop.
I know they did so.

Sir Val. Let me hold thy hand.

Hero. Never, till her thou hast wrong'd, thou offerest
To right. The world return to, thou wouldst quit
It seems for me. Resume its habit; hie
To Hero Sutton's, whom I shall advise
To look for thee to-morrow eve. Repeat
What I have said to thee. If she denies
What I aver, be free to come to me,
And welcome too! If she acknowledges,
The hand of her, whose heart thou hast purloin'd,
Behoves thee ask and take

Sir Val. Yet hear me!

Hero. Nay!

These are the terms on which we break or meet.

Sir Val. If she rejects me?

Hero. Then will Ruth be thine.

Sir Val. If she accepts me?

Hero. Then, still thine, Ruth dies! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*An Ante-Room leading into Hero's Chamber
in the same house.*

Enter LEWSON, from the Window.

Lew. Safe! Safe!—all silent! What has turn'd my feet
From flesh to lead? My body, which to bear
Their function is, appears to drag them on.
I wont not thus to feel. Ferrying across
From Limehouse now, I saved a drowning man.
Twice had he sunk in sight of his young brood,
That with their dam kept fluttering on the shore.
O, how they bless'd me! while the standers by
Echoed them, and to all inquirers said,
That ask'd who saved him, "Yonder's the good man!"
And I afoot to do an evil act!
Another should have saved him! Let it pass!
Is this her chamber? No, her dressing-room.
Ay, here's her woman's gear. What holds this case?
Her paint, I'll warrant—her cosmetics—aught
To give another skin; they're ne'er content
With nature's; patches, perfumes, dentifrice!
A book?—I'll wager one she durst not show!

A Bible! Umph! Strange reading that, methinks,
 For a fine lady! Here's a leaf turn'd down;
 What says the place? It seems to talk to me!
 I'll read no further! So—what have we here?
 Her letters! Excellent! Her letters!—now
 To see how they can look and talk the saint,
 And play the sinner, still! A hundred pounds,
 The first is an amour!—A wretch's prayer
 For help—herself and children without food
 For two whole days! What, baggage! beg ere rob?
 Wait for a thaw, and see thy little ones
 Congeal to death i' the icy world!—With the thought,
 I have a feeling how the tiger's fangs
 Rend for her cubs the prey!—What alms didst hope
 Her ladyship would give?—What would suffice
 The dressing of her gown she wears a night
 And casts aside, for foul! What's here—is this
 Her answer—or the copy on't? Indeed!
 Ay, when she gives she gives! She seems to think
 That poverty, like plenty, is made up
 Of flesh and blood. There's food for dam and whelps
 For a whole week—The letter's to my wife!
 She dined to-day,—fall to't—fall to't—thy brood
 May gorge them now! Methinks I see them feed!
 Heaven bless her!—What! Heaven bless her, did I say?
 Then, what do I do here? No more of this!
 I've work to do, chimes not with thoughts like these.
 No more on't! Footsteps!—So—Beast to thy lair.
 [*Conceals himself.*]

Enter HERO; she goes to the window, and looks out.

Hero. Whether mine eye with a new spirit sees,
 Or nature is grown lovelier, I know not;
 But ne'er, methinks, was sunset half so sweet!
 He's down, and yet his glory still appears,
 Like to the memory of a well-spent life,
 That's golden to the last, and when 'tis o'er,
 Shines in the witnesses it leaves behind.
 They say, a ruddy sunset a fair day!
 Oh! may it be a day without a cloud,
 Which of my fate beholds the clearing up;
 That I may quote it, ever, as a sign
 Of sincere fortune, often as I say
 Was ever day so bright! How calm is all—
 How calm am I!—Would every breast I knew
 Were lodge to heart so tranquil,—There was one—
 A most strange history! Is she alive,
 Or dead? [*EUSTACE appears at the window.*] Who's there?

Eust. [*Entering.*] A friend!

Hero. Help!

Eust. Hush! I come
 For safety!

Hero. To thyself?

Eust. To thee! Look here,—

Lest I should miss thee, I prepared this scroll.
More brief 'twill tell my errand, than my tongue
Could do't.

Hero. [*Reads.*] Lord Athunree!—This very night!
My house beset!—myself by force abstracted!

Eust. If thou hast kindred in the neighbourhood,
Or friend thou canst rely upon, forthwith
Of thy immediate danger caution them,
By hands you can confide in—for my pains,
I pray you pay me with the only audience
Of some poor moments, when I'll take my leave.

Hero. [*To herself.*] I need not fear him! On his o'ercast
brow

'Tis grief, not guilt, that lowers.—A minute's patience.
I shall rejoin you.

[*Goes out.*]

Eust. Thou art happy, Hero,
And she that loves thee, weeps—but not that thou
Art happy! Thy fair fortune is the likeness
Of what was once my own! It is a face
Reminds me of a valued friend that's lost,
And which I bless, the while it makes me weep!

Hero. [*Re-entering.*] What you advised, I've done—and
now your pleasure?

Eust. Have I your leave, I'll sit. I've used some haste—
Am somewhat out of breath—I thank you! So!
Pray you be seated, too. You've had your share
Of friends?—Your 'haviour's of the winning kind,
That goodness sweetens!—You are frank—You love
Another's weal more than you envy it—
And such a one makes friends.—'Mongst those you've found,
You surely some must miss, else was your fate
Past earthly blessing happy?

Hero. I've lost friends.

Eust. By—death?

Hero. By death.

Eust. And any by misfortune?

Hero. Misfortune!—No, not any.

Eust. [*Rising.*] What!—not one?
Good night!

Hero. What mean you? Do you take me for
A season friend, no stancher than the bird,
Whose time the sun appoints to come and go,
And's with us when 'tis summer?—Oh, you wrong me!
What!—I to love, as loves that summer bird
The land he makes his gay sojourning in,
My friend, because 'tis leaf and blossom time!
Indeed you wrong me!—Knew I, at this moment,
One cheek I loved, was beggar'd of its smiles—
Not one left to it—I vow to thee, the next—
If back'd my power my will, *before* the next—

My own should be its neighbour.—Oh! how much
You wrong me!

Eust. Glad I am I've done thee wrong—
In sooth, I am—and yet I wrong'd thee not,
I only miss'd thy meaning! Hadst not a friend
Misfortune lost thee?—not that thou shunnedst her,
But that her heavy and most strange affliction
To thee and all her sex forbade her access?

Hero. A friend?—a sister! What a fate was hers!
Of all I valued, she the being was
I least could measure worth with. Of all grace,
The pattern was she—person, features, mind,
Heart, everything, as nature had essay'd
To frame a work which none might find a flaw in!
And yet 'tis said, she fell—and if she did,
Let none be sure they'll stand! She couldn't fall!
There's such a thing as purity on earth,
And if she fell, there could be no such thing!
She didn't fall!—No! No!—I knew her, or
I never knew myself! Virtue with her
Was not a lesson we must con before
'Tis learn'd by heart; it was a portion of her,
Much as her stature, feature, shape, or voice,
Which, saving nature's, hand ne'er gave to her.
She has been outraged, slander'd—aught—but lost!
She could not fall—she did not—could not fall!
What ails thee?

Eust. He that sets a banquet down
To famish'd lips, serves poison, and not meat,
For, ten to one, the greedy guest will die.
Yet blesses he the host, as I bless thee,
That spread'st for me this feast!

Hero. This feast; What feast?
Move not thy lips thus impotently, or
I'll think thou diest indeed! What feast dost mean?
Is't one the heart makes? 'Tis—Thine eyes discourse
Language 'twould tax a hundred tongues to speak!
In wonder's name, who art thou? Say thou'rt not
What thou appear'st, I'll tell thee who thou art!
Could I not do't?—Could I not?—Helen?—What?
Well?—Am I right?—If ever thou valuedst
The homage of this breast, ne'er fear to claim it!
'Tis thine!—all!—all!—demand it!—take it!—come!—
'Tis thine as e'er it was!—Well?

Eust. [*Rising, but unable from emotion, to advance.*] Hero!

Hero. Nay,
I'll bring it to thee, then! That's right—weep on!
My sweet!—my dear! my poor! my wrong'd one!—yes,
Wrong'd—wrong'd—I say't again! Thou need'st not speak,
Thou hast not strength—thou'lt sleep with me to-night?—
To-morrow for thy story.

Helen. Nay, to-night.

I'm more myself again!—Let it be so—
Sit down a while. How hast thou been, my Hero

Hero. Well, sweet, most well!

Helen. Now by the love

Thou bear'st me, interrupt me not; but hear
My story out. Thou hast been told, that from
A roof which shelters aught but innocence,
In company with one, whom innocence,
That would be safe, should shun; i' the face of day,
Thy friend was seen to issue. Thither, by
A forgéd tale of misery, alone
She was decoy'd—exposed to outrage there—
Rescued by him—by him conducted thence—
Met in the street ere well her foot had left
The threshold—countenance refused her tale
By him that could have vouch'd its truth—by *him*
Her tale discredited, whose credence was
Life! happiness! all but honour! In a word,
Her virtue blasted, that had ne'er known blight—
Denounced as canker'd—rotten—while was sound
As thy own, Hero!—even, as thy own!

Hero. I know't.

Helen. You know't? Alas, you know it not—you *think it*—
Think it in the teeth of damning fact. It is
Your love!—your charity! An alms—an alms—
Is all that friend so kind as even thou
Can render now to Helen—Yet I'll be righted!
But fare thee well—'tis late!

Hero. You'll stay with me?

Helen. What! let me press thy pure sheets, Hero, with
A tainted name? How I have wrong'd thee!—Wouldst
Believe't? I once came to thy door—but there
I stopp'd. I was not wont to ask for leave
To enter it, and I must ask for't now!
I left thy door again—the certainty
To see it never ope thy friend preferr'd
To but the chance to see it shut upon her!

Hero. To out the chance to see it shut on thee!
What warrant ever gave I for such chance?
Oh! had it wider, freer oped than e'er,
It only had anticipated what
Its mistress' arms had done—what now they do!
You shall not leave—nay, in sooth you shall not!

Helen. In this attire, think, should I here be seen—

Hero. I'll think of nought, but that thou now art here.
But that thou here shalt stay. Thou canst be gone
At dawn. Thou know'st a thousand things I have
To ask of thee—how we shall meet again?—
Where I shall find thee?—what thy projects are—
Deny me not, I pray thee! 'Twill but make
The greater beggar of me—Come!—You can,
You must—you will—this is my chamber—Come! [*They go out.*]

Lew. [*Entering in disorder.*] I cannot do't! Heaven's on the watch against it!

'Tis said it guards the good, and if it does,
 Its spirits sure are here—They are!—or why
 This fearful awe come over me? I feel
 As eyes were on me, that I cannot see—
 Above me, lips that speak but are unheard—
 And hands around me, with a thousand times
 The power of flesh and blood, though sightless as
 The air! Heaven will not have it be—It sets
 Before mine eyes, the fruit of what I've done—
 To warn me back from what I've come to do.
 That hapless maiden owes her injured name
 To me! I was the instrument to ruin her!
 To fix on her the wanton's brand, that ne'er
 In thought it seems incurr'd the wanton's stain!
 To damn in this world, what i' the next is blest
 Oh! heavy sin—Go sin no more! How's this?
 Go sin no more! So said the book to me.
 Then Heaven cares for sinners, it should seem!
 O blessed book! I'll go and sin no more!
 The chime! It lacks a quarter of an hour—
 The very clock would save me. Was't the hour,
 They'd have me in their fearful toils again!
 Away! away! speed feet, while ye are free,
 Softly and swift—the minutes fly! Away!

[*Exit.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—HERO'S *Town House.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM SUTTON *and* EMILY.

Sir Wil. What! Helen Mowbray come to life again?

Emily. 'Tis even so! and metamorphosed as
 You ne'er would dream. But pray you, use despatch.
 On the reverse of this she gave your niece,
 And which, unthinkingly, no doubt, was given
 To *her*, 'tis clear some mortal work's on hand—
 For here are time, and place, and weapon named,
 Upon the part of base Lord Athunree.
 There yet is time! Prevent it, while you may!

Sir Wil. [*Rings the bell. Attendant enters.*] Hark, sir!
 Take charge of this, and have it straight
 Put into execution by the chief
 O' the city officers—Look to it well!

And now, what means this full assembly call'd
Of friends and relatives, to feast with Hero?

Emily. I must not tell—but guess.

Sir Wil. I cannot guess
The shapes particular of women's fancies,
Especially in one of Hero's vein.
Retains she her disguise?

Emily. No; casts it off—
And with it, habit, more a part of her.
She is changed beyond belief.

Sir Wil. Not my belief,
When I shall see it.

Emily. I must hie to her,
And set her mind at rest on this affair,
Touching her friend, which chance reveal'd to her,
In time, I trust, the issue to prevent.
You have given order they be hither brought?

Sir Wil. I have. Where's Hero?

Emily. In the library,
In earnest converse still with that strange man,
Who pray'd an audience with her, and I think,
Brought news that has surprised her. Dinner-time
Will see an end and clearing up of all.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*The Outskirts of London.*

Enter WALSINGHAM and HELEN (still in the disguise of EUSTACE).

Wal. Not yet arrived!

Helen. 'Tis 'fore the time.

Wal. How feel you?

Helen. Collected, and myself.

Wal. You look so. Clear
Your 'haviour, as this day of trial only
The ordinary mate of yesterday,
You'll win!

Helen. I shall!—I am resolved to win.

Wal. Show me thy sword.

Helen. I cannot draw it, but
My life must follow.

Wal. How?

Helen. It is my heart—
This which I wear, is nothing. Call it steel,
'Tis steel!—a straw, it even is a straw!
Its stamina not lodging in itself,
But in the heart that wields it.

Wal. This is calmness
Upon the eve of combat!

Helen. Walsingham,
There is a kind of nature that clears up

The instant it confronts a trying thing.
In common evils, hesitates and fears;
In ills of moment, shows sedate resolve.

Wal. Why, that is woman's proper contradiction.

Helen. It passes for't; but sometimes 'bides in man,
Not therein less of his high caste deserving,
Though so resembling woman! Think'st not so?

Wal. Assuredly.

Helen. You see this mood is mine,
Nor was I on my guard to let it out—
'Twill lose me credit with you. Best have pass'd
For Sir Redoubtable any day o' the year!
You more had thought of me.

Wal. No!

Helen. You say I am calm?
I am so—that is, as to the issue of
This mortal meeting—for 'tis mortal!—but
I have a trouble, and—wilt thou believe me—
'Tis touching thee!—It grieves me, Walsingham,
To leave thee an abuséd man behind me!
What late thou told'st me I have ponder'd well,
And thereon founded arguments, methinks,
More solid, than I urged on you before.
They are here—your poor friend's legacy to you!

[*Gives a paper.*]

Stop!—You're about to speak—Don't speak as yet.

If I should fall, you pledge your gentle word,

My body you will have direct convey'd

Unto the lady's I have herein named.

[*Gives another paper.*]

Deliver'd to her custody—her *own*!

Nor until then, one fastening, fold, loop, thread

O' the vesture, thou wilt suffer be disturb'd—

No, not to search, or probe, or stanch a wound,

Or settle whether I'm alive or dead,

Or anything! To this, thou pledgest thee?

Wal. Dear boy, I do!

Helen. Another thing—

Wal. What is't?

Thou pausest, as in doubt I'll grant it thee.

Whate'er it be, I swear to do it.

Helen. Ha!

Then hast thou set my heart indeed at rest!

Mind, thou hast sworn to do't. Revenge me not!

That comprehendeth all! Don't speak again,

Till I have done, quite done. Thou lovest me?

Wal. I do.

Helen. How much?

Wal. As never man before!

Helen. Speak not of love gone by, but present love.
With those thou lovest now, how rates thy love?

Wal. As first.

Helen. As first of all?

Wal. Of all!

Helen. All friends?

Not one before me?

Wal. No!

Helen. Not one?

Wal. Not one!

Helen. And all love told?

Wal. All love—but love itself!

Helen. Shake hands!—We'll say good bye before they come,
Lest there arrive occasion, and no time;

Good bye!—Oh, happy women, that are friends!

They may embrace—men cannot do so.

Wal. Yes,

When they are brothers.

Helen. Feel'st thou as my brother?

I feel as I were thine.

Wal. My boy! my boy;

[*Embracing HELEN.*]

Heaven!—but thou faint'st!

Helen. No!—Are they coming!—Heaven

Reward thee, for thy precious love of me!

They are at hand—Good bye!

Wal. Show me thy sword!

'Tis somewhat longer, I believe, than mine,

And I would try the depth of yonder stream,

In case we need to wade it.

[*Goes out, and returns without the sword.*]

It has slipp'd,

And gone down to the bottom!—Boy, your quarrel's mine;

To humour thee, alone, I gave consent

To second thee. What!—Stand, aside, with broad

And lusty breast and sinewy arm, and see

Thy stripling form the deadly point oppose,

In the athletic villain's practised hand;

Instead of grasping thee with loving force,

Like to a doting father his boy-son,

Or elder brother his dear younger one,

Taking thy place, and swinging thee away!

No, boy! Before thy young veins part a drop

Of their rich streams, my channels shall run dry!

Helen. Is this fair, Walsingham?

Wal. Yet, hear me on!

I find I could not live without thee; so

Guarding thy life I but protect my own.

That's fair—That's rational—That's sound in nature!

Want'st further reason?—I will give it thee—

Thou art like her!

Helen. Whom?

Wal. Boy, hast thou read my soul—

Have I turn'd o'er its every page to thee—

Love, hate, hope, doubt, possession, loss, bliss, pain,

Contentment and despair—and in each one

Shown thee one all-pervading cause enwrit,

For nothing? Whom could I compare thee to,
 But her—the heroine of my sad story?
 Whom much thy face resembles! Hast thou never
 Remark'd me gazing in abstraction on thee,
 As though, upon perusal of thy features,
 While seem'd mine eye intent, my soul was poring
 Upon some other thing?—I have done it oft—
 Will do it once again! Your eyes are hers,
 In form and hue, but sunk; a darkness too,
 Not heavy, yet enough to make a cloud,
 Sits—not disparagingly though—'neath thine;
 Hers were two starry brilliants, set in pearl!
 The outline of the nose is quite the same,
 But that of thine is sharper—'tis thy sex.
 The mouth is very like—oh, very like!
 But there's a touch—a somewhat deep one too—
 Of bitterness.—The cast of hers was sweetness,
 Enlocking full content. The cheek is not
 At all alike!—'tis high; and lank below;
 And sallow—not a dimple in't—all contrast
 To the rich flower'd and velvet lawn of hers.
 But though thou art not she, entire—thou art
 Enough of her to make me love thee, boy!
 With such a brother-love, as brother, never,
 I dare be bound, for brother felt before!
 I spoke not of thy hair—It is a wood
 Run wild compared to hers, and thrice as deep
 I' the shade—Yet, you are very like her!—quite
 Enough, to make me pour my heart's blood out
 As water, for thy sake!—They are at hand!

Helen. Then let me be at least thy sword-bearer;
 And when thou need'st the steel, I'll keep the sheath
 Which in thy motions would embarrass thee!

Wal. Take it, and thank thee!

Enter LORD ATHUNREE and FELTON.

Ath. We are late for you, sirs;
 But not, I think, for time.

Wal. You are in time.

Helen. Draw off, till, with his second, I arrange
 Preliminaries—which I know are wont,
 In questions of this kind. What we decide,
 I shall possess you of; and then proceed.
 Sir, let us speak. You know me, principal.
 My place my second would, perforce, usurp.
 Permit him not, as you're a gentleman!
 You see he is unarm'd—your rapier draw,
 When I draw this, and keep him well aloof.
 You promise this?

Fel. I do! [*Aside.*] It keeps the odds
 Upon our side!

Helen. [*Drawing.*] Lord Athunree, I am ready!

Fel. [*Drawing and opposing WALSINGHAM.*] Stand back, sir,
at your peril!

Wal. Ha!—the boy
Has baffled, and outwitted me! [*Advances.*

Fel. Stand back!
I bar all interruption to the game
We are summon'd here to play.

Wal. A coward act,
To draw upon a naked man!

Fel. My lord!
Why draw you not and he his weapon out?
Proceed, my lord, at once!

Ath. Before I do,
I ask, and I must learn, in name of whom
The urchin has arraign'd and challenged me.
I fight not, till I know upon what cause.

Helen. The cause of Helen Mowbray!

Wal. Drop your hand,
And let me pass!—or sure as that's a sword
My heart is on your point!

Ath. Spite of thyself,
Another minute grant I thee to live.
I will not draw, until I know thy name.

Helen. Mowbray!

Ath. Her brother?

Helen. Anything you please,
Caitiff without a parallel in crime!

Wal. A brother!—Hold! Lord Athunree! Look, sir,
[*To FELTON.*

A moment give I thee, to take thy choice
'Twixt murdering me, or suffering to pass!
Why, what care I for life!

[*Rushes upon FELTON, and wrests the sword from him.*
At the same moment, Officers and Servants enter.

First Officer. Hold! Stop!—Proceed
At your peril! You are all our prisoners, sirs;
Sir William Sutton's warrant makes you so,
Which here I show to you. Surrender, then,
And to his niece's bear us company.

[*They all go out. WALSINGHAM and HELEN last, who
stop a little behind the rest.*

Wal. Thou hast kill'd me, boy! How couldst thou
do so!
Or keep from one, who loved thee as I do,
A secret like to this? Her brother—so!
Her brother!—I shall love thee better still—
And better yet—yet not so well as her! [*They follow.*

SCENE III.—*The Street.**Enter SIR VALENTINE.*

Sir Val. Spite of my failing heart, thus far I've come
 With love to urge me, love to waive me back.
 My duty tender'd, fortune made or lost—
 Not tender'd, absolutely lost—no chance
 Permitted me to win! 'Tis Hero's form
 With the fair essence—match for thing so fair!—
 To Hero's form, without! It is a whole,
 Past calculation rich, against a part,
 And that the poorest—yet consummate rich,
 And I must play for both, or neither win!
 Or winning one, the other quite forego!
 It cannot be she loves me! Hero love me!
 A prideful pleasure kindles at the thought—
 But comes the gentle Ruth, and puts it out
 With genial brightness of bland nature, as
 The sun a little fire. O sun most fair,
 I richer were ne'er to have known thy light
 Than knowing it to lose it. Ne'er did man
 Draw lots with chances more opposed than mine.
 A little moment I am made or lost;
 Lost past retrieving—past addition made!
 Then must I, like a desperate gamester, on!
 Throw fear of loss aside—though loss of all—
 And think of nothing but the chance of gain
 That makes me rich for life!—past affluence! [Goes out.]

SCENE LAST.—*A Room in Hero's House.*

SIR WILLIAM SUTTON *seated in the centre*—WALSINGHAM,
 HELEN, LORD ATHUNREE, FELTON, *Officers, &c.*

Sir Wil. Lord Athunree, charged with intent thou stand'st
 To break the peace of our right sovereign lord
 The king. What answer'st? Or refusest
 To plead?—Is this thy hand?—Wilt answer that?
 Whose'er it is, it is a villain's, lord!
 For the same writer that arranged a fray
 Had plann'd a felony—in danger put
 A lady's jewelry, so rich to her—
 Not all the caskets of the proudest line
 Of noble dames, pour'd out into one heap,
 Could make a blaze to match it!

Ath. [*Aside.*] Curse my haste
 For such remissness, on the back to write
 Of the instructions first I pencill'd down
 To give the caitiff wretch—whose guess'd miscarriage
 Is now accounted for!

Sir Wil. Lord Athunree,
How say you?

Ath. For the combat you have marr'd,
My silence or denial nought avails.
You found me in the act. The challenger
You need to seek elsewhere.—I am not he.

Wal. Sir William, he says right.—He challenged not;
But he such provocation gave, as makes
The challenger more the challenged.—He had stain'd
A lady's credit, bringing it to naught,
Or causing it to pass for nothing more;
Which trespass, capital, her brother here—
In form a stripling, but in mind a man—
Indeed demanded reparation for,
Which to exact, my arm assay'd, but fail'd—
For I had woo'd, and won, and, as I thought,
Alone engaged the maid. Sir William, try,
If from that sacred seat of justice, voice
Of solemn adjuration can avail
To bring the truth to light—first, if the maid
Fell—the knowledge he, alone, of the truth,
Possessing.

Sir Wil. No, sir! Another
Can vouch she never fell!

Wal. She never fell?
O, ponder what you say!—Not rashly—O,
Not rashly raise a wretch from the abyss
Into the light, to cast him in again
On darkness heaving darkness! Now, I faint
With the day-flood that seems to burst upon me!
I say, "that seems," for such transition mocks
The doting of belief!—or heard I right?
Or knew'st thou what thou saidst? or, knowing it,
Knew'st thou didst speak on grounds of solid footing,
Something akin to rock?—It should be rock
Itself, to bear the fabric thou dost raise
Against the sea of doubts that surges on it!
O did she never fall? Did love itself
Take sides with hate to do her hateful wrong?
To blast her—to abandon her—and leave her
A prey to haggard fortune—death or madness?

Sir Wil. Collect thyself, and further audience lend,
Or bid me hold my tongue. The maiden lives.

Wal. Lives? Lives? Is innocent, perhaps, and loves;
O does she?

Sir Wil. Yes.

Wal. Thou seem'st to know what makes
My all, or naught of being! Innocent,
And lives and loves?

Ath. First prove her innocent.

Sir Wil. He cannot! what of that?—Another can!

Ath. Produce that other.

[*SIR WILLIAM beckons—LEWSON enters.*

Lew. Here he is.

Ath. Betrayed!

Wal. He hath confess'd—take notice all! The lips
That blurr'd fair Helen's name hath oped themselves,
To damn themselves, and do the maiden right!

Sir Wil. No need confession from that riven wretch!
To that abhorréd house thou saw'st her quit,
A letter, as from one she knew and loved,
In mortal strait enticed her. There, assail'd
With show of violence from this same man,
That lord premeditated succour brought her,
The whole his foul contrivance! You may leave!
You are known!—What penalty the law awards
For such default, be sure, shall be exacted!

Ath. Exacted? I defy you! Do your worst! [*Goes out.*

[*HELEN swooning, is caught by WALSINGHAM.*

Sir Wil. Look to thy mistress, Walsingham.

Wal. Where is she?—

I nothing see except this fainting boy,
Whom help me to restore.

Sir Wil. To wake him up,
Breathe in his ear the name thou lovest most!
Throw back those ebon clusters thoroughly,
And consciousness will start upon thee straight,
Thou never dream'dst of, and thou shalt confess
That love, howe'er it hath a jealous eye,
Hath not a piercing one.

Wal. Herself!—my own!
My sweet!—my idolized!—my innocent
Helen!—her eyelids quiver—Helen! Helen!
They ope! Dost thou not know me, love? Revive!
Die not away again! Core of my life!
Helen—my gentle one! My patient one!
My faithful one, unwarp'd by rudest strain!
My loving one!—More loving—yes, I say it
That love thee best—more loving yet than loved!
Look at me! Answer me! This semblance but
Of death, is death itself to me! 'Tis I—
'Tis Walsingham!—'Tis I—repentingly,
Humbly, imploring thee to speak to him,
To look upon him—pity him!—forgive him!

Helen. I love thee, Walsingham. Have all thou ask'st
In that one little word! [*They retire.*

SIR VALENTINE enters.

Sir Wil. Sir Valentine!

Sir Val. The same, Sir William Sutton.

Sir Wil. You are welcome.

Sir Val. In strait where things like life and death depend,

Suspense is but the rack—I'll know my fate!
 Sir William Sutton, I am come to crave
 An audience of your niece.

Sir Wil. Apprise my niece
 Sir Valentine de Grey would speak with her.

Sir Val. At thought of sight of that proud form again,
 Old motions in me stir—but only stir.
 Come thought of Ruth—they are, at once, at rest!

HERO enters, most magnificently attired.

O what a tower of grace and loveliness,
 And stateliness, and absolute command,
 She bursts upon mine eyes! Were't tenanted
 As I would have it!

Hero. Well, Sir Valentine!
 Your will?

Sir Val. I come a promise to redeem,
 Thou'lt think most strange, as I do, though I made it.
 A suit I have, the gain or loss of which
 Depends on thee, although to thee not pleaded!
 Shall I be pardon'd, who, against my will,
 Past sufferance presume?

Hero. Not mine! Say on.

Sir Val. It is the voice of Ruth! I wonder not
 At that—but breathing Ruth's benignity!

Hero. Shall I *entreat* thee say thy wish?

Sir Val. More bland
 The accents yet! Can Ruth have told me right,
 And *does* she love me?

Hero. Sir, 'tis painful to me
 To mark such hesitation, when, to have,
 You only have to ask; and, asking, do
 A pleasure—giving leave to pleasure you.

Sir Val. [*Aside.*] No strain hath love, if this be not its
 mood.

I win her, and am lost! Yet lose with gain!

Sir Wil. My niece awaits your question.

Hero. Uncle, peace.
 Give him his time—the measure on't his will!
 To look for pleasure is itself a pleasure.
 But half they feast who to a feast sit down
 The moment it is named. Say, that he wait
 An hour, why then, so much I banquet more,
 And yet fall to with relish.

Sir Val. O such words
 To fall from Hero's lips a month before!
 Come certainty, whate'er along with it!
 Dost thou affect me?

Hero. Yes, Sir Valentine.

Sir Val. Wilt take me for thy husband?

Hero. Yes, again.

Sir Val. Good bye, sweet Ruth!

Hero. Strange welcome this!

Sir Val. Good bye

To sweet content of modest happiness!

Lady, my title's gone!

Hero. For that receive

More hearty welcome than thou gav'st to me.

Sir Val. My fortune dwindled.

Hero. As it sinks, you rise.

For that receive more hearty welcome yet.

Sir Val. My tastes are alter'd.

Hero. Tell me what their kind,

They shall be mine—whate'er thy taste, rank, state,

My state, my rank, my tastes, shall be the same!

Sir Val. Then must we wed.—O for that plumed tiar,

The simple hood!—that costly lace, the coif

Close-pinn'd and modest—clear!—that gorgeous dress,

The gown embroider'd with humility!

Hero. They are donn'd at thy command, and these cast off.

Sir Val. And canst thou, too, the vesture of the mind

That made thee cherish these, cast off?

Hero. I can!

Hard things which love cannot for love perform.

Sir Val. Such bounty should enrich.—Alas! for me,

Who, spite of all its granting, must be poor.

Clever. [*Entering.*] Friend Ruth, the dinner waits.—Friend
Peter here!

And to the world, like thee, gone back again!

Then change of gear for me! Bold serving-man,

Who would be other than his betters are!

No more, friend Obadiah—know me hence

For Master Clever, name and nature one!

Sir Val. Have I but dreamt 'tis night, and is it day!

A masque is it, I have been acting in,

And known it not? Canst thou be both, yet one?

Is Ruth but Hero—Hero none but Ruth?

Then welcome Hero for the sake of Ruth,

And Ruth more welcome yet for Hero's sake!

And is it so?—or does the fable end

In cold return to dull reality?

Hero. No; in reality that's born of it

And is its fairer likeness!—real grown

What first was only seeming. I have become

The part, I lately play'd; the thing I was

Before, have ceased to be! Such virtue hath

The only show of virtue! For which change

Thy noble nature do I thank, although

Perhaps, with more than prudent jealousy,

Exacting; and precipitate, where patience

Might well have counsell'd pause. With Hero's form,

Take Ruth's contentment and humility—

Their dress, whate'er your love would have it be!

But here is one unchanged, nor needing change, [To HELEN.
Except where seeming goes for next to naught!
My Helen! thou art happy now!

Helen. I am!

Wal. And I, that scarce deserve my happiness!
But what shall make me misbeliever hence?
How could I doubt thee! Strong appearances
By stronger vouchers back'd, it was, that made me.
But that detected now—and these explain'd—
Thy virtue rises like a pyramid
I wonder aught could hide!—A life of trust
Shall for a season of misgiving pay thee!
Yet more I have to say—of that anon—
For guests are here you thought not of, before,
On whom your feast that waits for us depends—
Marr'd, if disrelish'd,—made, if they're content!

END OF WOMAN'S WIT.



THE
MAID OF MARIENDORPT:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

DEDICATION.

9th October, 1838.

MY DEAR SIR,

Permit me to inscribe this Drama to the man whose spontaneous good offices of anxious confiding friendship have essentially facilitated the prosecution of my literary labours, during a protracted period of peculiar difficulty.

Your attached and faithful Servant,

J. S. KNOWLES.

To EDWARD COOPER, ESQ.

33, Piccadilly.

[CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET IN 1838.)

<i>General Kleiner</i>	Governor of Prague,	Mr. STRICKLAND.
<i>Baron Idenstein</i>	his Nephew	Mr. WALTER LACY.
<i>Lieutenant of the Castle</i>		Mr. BISHOP.
<i>Joseph</i>	{ a Jew, friend to Muhldenau .. }	Mr. WEBSTER.
<i>Ahab</i>	his Steward	Mr. GOUGH.
<i>Muhldenau</i>	{ the Minister of Mariendorpt.. }	Mr. KNOWLES.
<i>Rupert</i>	betrothed to Meeta..	Mr. WARRELL.
<i>Hans</i>	{ Servant to Muhl- denau. }	Mr. BUCKSTONE.
<i>Rodolph</i>	{	Mr. GALLOT.
<i>Gerold</i>	{ Soldiers }	Mr. HUTCHINGS.
<i>Lodowick</i>	{	Mr. GREEN.
<i>Courier</i>		Mr. CLARK.
<i>Servant.</i>		

<i>Adolpha</i>	Wife of Idenstein ..	Miss COOPER.
<i>Madame Roselheim,</i>	Mother of Rupert ..	Mrs. DAWSON.
<i>Meeta</i>	{ Daughter to Muhldenau }	Miss ELPHINSTONE.
<i>Esther</i>	{ Housekeeper to Muhldenau.. }	Mrs. GLOVER.

Soldiers, Male and Female Servants, &c.

THE
MAID OF MARIENDORPT.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Garden, low Garden Wall, and a House.*

Enter a Courier.

Cour. Hoa, there! You in the garden there!

Hans [*without*]. Anan!

[*Enters.*

Good day, Sir. A fine morning. Did you call?

O Esther! Esther!

Cour. Who lives here?

Hans. My master.

Cour. That know I, well as you do! Do you think
I took you for the owner of the house?

Hans. I never said you did. O Esther!

Cour. Who
Lives here?

Hans. My master, as I said before.

Cour. You sluggish-witted knave! I want to know
Your master's name.

Hans. Couldn't you tell me so
At once? What need of going round about,
The gate before your nose? Why give you talk,
And call you names, when all the fault's your own?
How could I guess it was my master's name
You wish'd to know—O Esther!

Cour. Who lives here?

Hans. The minister of Mariendorpt.

Cour. Is that
Thy master's name?

Hans. Why, 'tis all one. His name
Is Muhldenau, and he's the minister
Of Mariendorpt.

Cour. Is that the only door
To the house?

Hans. Go round, you'll find another door—
The proper one—O Esther!

Cour. This way?

Hans. Yes.

Cour. I'd like to have the quick'ning of thy wits!

Esther [*without*]. What does that coxcomb speaking there so high?

Hans. There's Esther coming! You had best be off!

Cour. Hang you and her together! [*Goes out.*]

Hans. That is kind.

I would not mind to hang along with her!
 I'm sick for love! I'm sure I am! I have lost
 My appetite! My stomach was my clock
 That used to give me note of eating-time—
 It never warns me now! A smoking dish
 Was sure to set my heart a-beating once;
 Now be it flesh, or fish, or fowl, or aught,
 It moves me nothing. I would rather feast—
 A thousand times I would—on Esther's face!
 I'm mortal sick for love! I used to sleep;
 Scarce touch'd my head my pillow, I was off,
 And, let me lie, I took my measure on't
 Six hours, at least, upon a stretch! but now
 I toss and turn, lie straight, or doubled up,
 Enfold mine arms, or throw them wide abroad,
 Rhyme o'er my prayers, or count a hundred out,
 And then begin again—yet not a wink
 The richer for't, but rise as I lie down!
 And 'tis true love that ails me!—very love!
 Of womankind but one can work my cure!
 'Tis not as one may fancy veal, and, yet,
 Put up with mutton! If I get not her,
 I starve and die! How I *do* love thee, Esther!
 But thou regard'st it not, nor pay'st it heed;
 Thou ratest me as nothing; but I'm something,
 Or never had I fall'n in love with thee.
 Nor durst I tell thee how I love thee, Esther!
 O! my fair Esther! O! my goddess, Esther!—
 My lily, pink, rose, tulip, everything
 That's beautiful and sweet!—would thou wast by
 To hear the love-names I am calling thee!

ESTHER enters, speaking angrily, holding some roots.

Esther. Hoa, sirrah Hans? Is this your work?

Hans. Dear Esther!

Esther, I can bear anything, except
 Your anger! labour without wages!—work
 From morn till night—go without breakfast, dinner,
 Or supper—suffer aught, yet be a man!
 But when you rate me I am good for nothing!—
 A joint that's pick'd to the bone—fish, three days stale—
 Wine gone a month without the stopper—cheese
 Scoop'd to the rind and kept in a hot pantry,
 Or foot of capon only with the strings
 Raked from the garbage where't has lain a week!

Don't scold me, then—in sooth you should not do't,
For never say I unkind word to thee,
But call thee, still, all sorts of loving names.

Esther. You've spoil'd my garden! hoe'd my tulips up
Instead of weeds—you have!—

Hans. Don't stamp at me,
It makes my heart jump—Ah!—'Twas kind of you
To stop! But knew she how I loved her foot,
She would not stamp it at me.

Esther. Why do you touch
My garden?

Hans. 'Tis to make it orderly;
Keep the earth smooth, and rake it small as crumbs;
Prop the tall flowers with standards; clear the beds
Of chick-weed, grass, and thievish dandelion,
That sucks up all the nourishment around it;
Trim the box edges straight, and of a piece;
And roll the gravel-walks till they are even
And smooth as any carpet.

Esther. Would your pains
Would spare themselves! The other day you broke
My finest rose.

Hans. It was with kissing it!
It was indeed your finest rose, and so
I call'd it Esther; and, in very truth,
Made love to it, and in my rapture broke it!
O Esther, if you knew——

Esther. Knew what?

Hans. Nay, nothing.
You take me up so snappishly! I am sure
I bear you much good will—I say *good will*
Because I am afraid to tell you what
I bear you; and when you intreat me harshly,
I can't endure it, but it brings my heart
Into my throat, that I begin to choke,
And then I fall a-crying. Don't you see
I'm crying now—and wiping of my eyes?

Esther. A fly has got into them.

Hans. Do you say
A fly? I would it were so small a thing!
I would it were a gnat, a wasp, a hornet—
Better be stung by anything, than Esther.
A fly indeed! I would it were a fly—
It was no fly! O Esther, if you knew!

Esther. Knew what? What dost thou mean?

Hans. Alack-aday!

Esther. Go clean the knives and forks! [*Stamping at him.*]

Hans. They are made of steel,
And steel is hard, and, if it is, no wonder.
'Tis steel—and 'tis its nature! 'Tis not so
With human hearts, for they are flesh and blood,
Whereof was never made, nor *will* be made,

Nor *can* be made, a knife and fork; and yet
No steel at times is harder! 'Tis a pity.

Esther. Is all that silver clean'd?

Hans. How sweet a sound
Has silver! Yet 'tis heat-proof. Without fear
You dip it in a pot of boiling broth,
Which can not you the tongue, and yet how harsh
The tongue will sometimes sound!

Esther. [*Stamping.*] Have you your wits?

Hans. Yes!—No!—I only have a part of them.
I'll tell you where the other part is gone,
If you will let me.

Esther. Well, sir!

Hans. If you knew——

Esther. [*Stamping more violently.*] Begone, I'll never know!—

[*HANS goes out.*]—What does he mean?

The creature's not in love with me? Ne'er yet
Met I the man was bold enough to woo me,
And that among bold men—and would *he* try,
Whom nature, by mistaking, framed a man,
And gave a chicken's heart to? I should like
To see him woo me! Why, I have ta'en his part,
As might a mother, her girl-petted boy's,
A thousand times—saved him from kicks and beatings—
Fought for him, standing by and crowing, while
He saw me win his battle—"If I knew!"
I half suspect the thing's in love with me!
And, now I think on't, for this month or two
The boy is alter'd wondrously! He sighs,
And sighs!—and mumbles to himself, and goes
Moping about the house. Sure as I live,
The boy's in love, and I'm to have a husband!
I, to whom man durst never say soft thing
The second time! A husband! I shall die
At the thought. [*Laughs.*] Make Hans my husband [*Laughs*]—
then the end
O' th' world were come. [*Laughs.*] O dear! my sides will
crack

With laughter! Esther go to church with Hans!

Take oath to love, to honour, and obey him! [*Laughs.*]

Yes, with a curtesy! and then take him home

In my apron! Esther become wife to Hans! [*Laughs.*]

Hans husband unto Esther! [*Laughs.*] Husband! [*Laughs.*]

Husband! [*Laughs.*]

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Mad. Ros. Why, Esther, what's the matter?

Esther. [*Still laughing.*] I'm laughing!

Mad. Ros. I see you are. What makes you laugh?

Esther. [*Laughing.*] A thought
That came into my head.

Mad. Ros. Dismiss it then—

Behoves you to be busy with grave matters.
Your master leaves us. He is summon'd hence
By sudden requisition of high duty.

Esther. How soon?

Mad. Ros. At once. Prepare for his departure.

Esther. Goes Meeta with him?

Mad. Ros. No, nor any one.

A secret mission takes him, for the service
Of her, the royal dame, who was his mistress.

Esther. And how will Meeta bear it?

Mad. Ros. As she ought.

Meeta knows nothing paramount to duty.

Esther. And this to fall upon the very eve
Of her wedding. Will it stop it?

Mad. Ros. I don't know.

Esther. I hope it will not; I have fear of crosses
In all such matters.

Mad. Ros. Thinkest thou of weddings?

Esther. Madam!

[*Stifling a laugh.*]

Mad. Ros. Why, Esther, what's the matter with you?

Esther. Nothing!—That is—Unless I laugh I die!

[*Goes out, laughing immoderately.*]

Mad. Ros. What's come to her? 'Tis not her mood to
laugh—

At such a time, too! But I have not thought
To waste on her. A dangerous mission this—
A search, unauthorized, and that, with foes
On every side of him. The reverend man
For duty puts his life in jeopardy,
Nor pauses, but as soon as call'd obeys—
His daughter on the eve of marriage too,
As Esther said—her bridegroom daily look'd for,
My son, my Rupert—fit to mate a princess,
But yet more fitly with sweet Meeta match'd,
In virtue without peer! Will he postpone
Their nuptials? No, he will not, if I know him.
But whatsoever he resolves is wise;
For piety is still the good man's law.

[*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in MUHLDENAU'S House.*

Enter MUHLDENAU.

Muhl. Meeta! I thought she was alone with me!
No wonder if the news transfixes her
With deep abstraction, newly told; when I,
Already in possession on't, alike
Forget myself! Why, Meeta! Come, my child.

Meeta. [*Entering.*] And must you go?

Muhl. The voice that calls me hence
I never disobey'd—durst disobey!

Thou art here in safety. This, thy father's will,
 From want assures thee—leaves thee heir, indeed,
 To modest competence. Thy nuptials too,
 Which, for this chance I would not have postponed,
 Give thee a father in a husband. Thus,
 Absolved from care on thy account, I go.
 For thou art good, my child, and hast beside
 A Father whom thou lovest to obey,
 With power no less than will to guard his child,
 That trusts in him—in every place at hand,
 At every hour—the Father of thy father!
 In whose strong hands, and pitiful as strong,
 I leave thee, saying, "Let his will be done!"

Meeta. Will you be long away?

Muhl. Not long, I hope;

Not *very* long. What call you long, my child?
 A year?

Meeta. O, not a year!

Muhl. No!—No! No fear
 Of that.—No; certainly I shall not be
 A year away.

Meeta. Nor half a year?

Muhl. Nor half

A year.

Meeta. Half that?

Muhl. I know not, but should think
 A lapse, more brief, should bring me home, again.

Meeta. Perhaps a month?

Muhl. Perhaps; but graver things
 Lie in the hands of seconds. Yea; a second
 Might balk departure, yet remove me from thee,
 Never again to meet thee—in this world—
 In this world, Meeta!—so, think less of absence,
 That, *here*, hath termination.

Meeta. Is the mission
 That takes you, dangerous?

Muhl. I'll not deceive you.
 It is.

Meeta. Sweet Heaven have mercy!

Muhl. It is well

To call for that—but better 'tis to know
 That what Heaven wills is right!—Believe in that,
 Thou'lt find it, in the end, to thy account.
 But what is danger? Is't always the thing
 We call so? Sin is danger, certainly;
 Putting in jeopardy man's proper life—
 The life to come!—but what is danger else?
 'Tis hard to say! Of this, howe'er, be sure,
 More oft it wears a smooth face, than a rough;
 So, for the most part, found, when least expected,
 And fatalest! The storms that are foretold
 Are easiest met—the reefs, avoided,

That raise the ripple! He was feasting, Meeta,
 Who saw the writing, to the prophet's mind
 Explain'd alone, though manifest to all;
 And while the impious revel yet held on,
 The flood was turn'd aside, to let the surge
 Of battle in; and ruin overthrew
 Him and his kingdom! Hear me, Meeta; glad
 This summons makes me, though it threatens danger;
 And, for I know that it will hearten thee
 To bear my absence, I will tell thee why.
 Sit down, my child. Thou hadst a sister, Meeta.

Meeta. A sister!

Muhl. I have kept the knowledge from thee,
 To save the questioning had follow'd it,
 And could not be replied to, without cost
 Of suffering, while recollection of
 Bereavement yet was young.

Meeta. I had a sister?

Muhl. You had a sister.

Meeta. Had?

Muhl. Had, Meeta.

Meeta. Had!

Alas! was I so rich, and knew it not?
 I had a sister! O what light and warmth
 Of love, I never knew before, the thought
 Hath shot into my soul!—And now—And now,
 All's strangely dark and cold! How is it, father,
 I had a sister, and remember not?

Muhl. Because 'twas in thy childhood, Meeta, when
 The memory, too tender, yields impressions
 Their causes ta'en away.—And yet there was
 A time, when thou remember'dst such a thing!

Meeta. Was there? O heartless Meeta! Once remember
 She had a sister, and forget it ever!

Muhl. Thou hast forgot the siege of Magdeburgh.

Meeta. No! I remember that! I never hear
 The thunder, but I think of that!—or see
 The lightning set the sky on fire, but that
 Comes back to me!—No!—no!—I recollect
 The siege of Magdeburgh!

Muhl. How long did it last?

Meeta. One night.

Muhl. Three months!

Meeta. I only recollect
 One night—and it was in the street, and men
 With horrid looks and yells ran to and fro!
 On horseback some, and some on foot—some firing,
 And some with weapons which they whirl'd and darted
 As they moved on!

Muhl. Ay! Mercy show'd they not,
 That night, to man or woman!

Meeta. Woman? No!

I saw them seize one by the hair!—I am sure
I did!

Muhl. You did—you told me so yourself.

Meeta. I told you so myself?

Muhl. You have forgot!

And can you wonder? You were barely then
Turn'd five years old. Were you not near that woman?

Meeta. Yes! close to her! I had a hold of her.

Muhl. That too you told me. Do you not remember?

Meeta. No.

Muhl. No!—Not when I found thee in the street
Wandering alone, and, 'twixt thy sobbings, on
Thy father calling?

Meeta. No.

Muhl. Thou told'st it me.

The following day, and often afterwards.

I let the fruitless inquisition drop.

So memory fell asleep! Remember'st aught

That woman carried?

Meeta. Carried?

Muhl. Carried.

Meeta. No.

Muhl. She was thy sister's nurse——

Meeta. It was a child

She carried! Was it? Yes—I see it now

In her arms, as plain as I see you. O heart!

What hast thou been about? All's clear as noon!—

A child she carried, and it was my sister!

I recollect my sister! Were they kill'd?

Muhl. The woman was.

Meeta. And not my sister?

Muhl. That

Knows Heaven alone! That night of carnage over,

We search'd the street—the woman's body found,

But, of thy little sister, not a trace!

Meeta. And yet you search'd the street?—She was not
kill'd!

Had she been kill'd, her body had been found

Sure as the nurse's—Yes!—and I have heard

Nine times in ten, when caught in mortal strait,

A woman with an infant in her arms,

Although she lose herself, will save her load!

She was not kill'd, for didn't I escape?

I, quite alone, and clamouring as you say!—

They hurt not me whom else soe'er they hurt;

And would they harm a little speechless child,

As like to smile at them as look afraid;

To come to them, if it could walk, as flee?

'Tis not in mortal man that has his wits,

To slay a little harmless, witless child!

To wound it, scratch it!—I would stake my life

She was not kill'd—Some good man snatch'd her up—

Took her away—put in a place of safety—
 Heaven bless him!—cherishes her now perhaps
 As if she were his own! Do you not think
 She is alive?—I'm *sure* she is alive;
 I have a sister still!

Muhl. Thy sanguine heart
 A little light enlarges into day.
 It is thy father's nature which thou hast,
 Uncheck'd in thee, in him subdued by time.
 Now see'st thou why this summons is a thing
 To welcome? Hitherto my debt to thee,
 My yearnings for my lost one still has held
 In check—yes, yearnings, Meeta; for I own
 The likeness, though a faint one, of thy hope,
 Touching thy sister, round thy father's heart
 Hath ever hung! but now that I am call'd—
 Commanded—for 'tis even so, my child—
 To leave thee—though the track I must pursue
 Borders with danger, yet it is a journey
 I undertake more pleased, than grudgingly;
 For—if we may believe in presages—
 And wherefore not, if we believe at all—
 As who shall shape and bound the ways of Heaven—
 To other issue than its proper one,
 And nearer to myself, this mission leads—
 Perhaps concerning thee!—perhaps—Yes, Meeta,
 I cannot help the thought, for, next to thee,
 It is the stay of my old age—perhaps
 Concerning—

Meeta. My lost sister.

Muhl. Yes, my child,
 Not dead, but lost as thou believ'st. How well
 You reason'd on't! The body was not found:
 A nurse, as now thou saidst, will lose herself,
 Yet save her load—'tis not, I do believe,
 In flesh and blood to slay a little child!
 You're right, the child was saved—is living yet!
 You have made your father turn a boy again!
 Well, be it so! I *do* believe it, Meeta!
 You are content, my child, to let me go?

Meeta. I am, sir—that is, not, as at the first,
 My heart grows sick at thought of losing you.
 Couldn't I go too?—No!—No!—There is danger,
 And that's my answer. Farewell, father!—There!
 We'll say good-bye at once!

Muhl. Not yet, my child!
 Shouldst thou require a friend, while I'm away,
 Here is the name of one. He lives in Prague:
 He is a Jew.

Meeta. A Jew?

Muhl. He'll give thee counsel,
 Shouldst thou have need of it.

I saw them seize one by the hair!—I am sure
I did!

Muhl. You did—you told me so yourself.

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 In check—yes, yearnings, Meeta; for I own
 The likeness, though a faint one, of thy hope,
 Touching thy sister, round thy father's heart
 Hath ever hung! but now that I am call'd—
 Commanded—for 'tis even so, my child—
 To leave thee—though the track I must pursue
 Borders with danger, yet it is a journey
 I undertake more pleased, than grudgingly;
 For—if we may believe in presages—
 And wherefore not, if we believe at all—
 As who shall shape and bound the ways of Heaven—
 To other issue than its proper one,
 And nearer to myself, this mission leads—
 Perhaps concerning thee!—perhaps—Yes, Meeta,
 I cannot help the thought, for, next to thee,
 It is the stay of my old age—perhaps
 Concerning—

Meeta. My lost sister.

Muhl. Yes, my child,
 Not dead, but lost as thou believ'st. How well
 You reason'd on't! The body was not found:
 A nurse, as now thou saidst, will lose herself,
 Yet save her load—'tis not, I do believe,
 In flesh and blood to slay a little child!
 You're right, the child was saved—is living yet!
 You have made your father turn a boy again!
 Well, be it so! I *do* believe it, Meeta!
 You are content, my child, to let me go?

Meeta. I am, sir—that is, not, as at the first,
 My heart grows sick at thought of losing you.
 Couldn't I go too?—No!—No!—There is danger,
 And that's my answer. Farewell, father!—There!
 We'll say good-bye at once!

Muhl. Not yet, my child!
 Shouldst thou require a friend, while I'm away,
 Here is the name of one. He lives in Prague:
 He is a Jew.

Meeta. A Jew?

Muhl. He'll give thee counsel,
 Shouldst thou have need of it.

Meeta. A Jew?

Muhl. Or, if

Thy funds run low, in sudden exigence,
He'll help them mount again.

Meeta. A Jew?

Muhl. Why not?

Meeta. And I a Christian father's child!

Muhl. Is not

A Jew a man? Wouldst thou, a Christian, help

A Jew, that's of thy creed an enemy?

Meeta. I would!

Muhl. And why not then a Jew help thee?

I know a reason; but the blame on't lies

Not on the other side. It is the race

Elect from all mankind, whose course is mark'd

From far-off time by high behests from Heaven,

By miracles and oracles, and deeds

Of mighty men who put their trust therein!

Don't fear thy father's friend!—Don't fear the Jew!

Meeta. I am corrected, sir.—I shall observe.

Muhl. Here comes thy Rupert's mother—and in time.

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

My absence, madam, need not be a let

To stay my daughter's nuptials with thy son.

I know a soldier's time is not his own;

And what is granted him, behoves him use.

So, Meeta, do not wait for my return,

If past the time, delay'd—Farewell, my child!

Madam, farewell!—We are in the hands of Heaven!

*[Goes out; and MEETA, after a struggle, falls weeping
upon the neck of MADAME ROSELHEIM.]*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—MUHLDENAU'S Garden.

*Wreaths of flowers hung from the branches of the trees—rustic
seats here and there, crnamented.*

Enter ESTHER and HANS.

Hans. Now, Esther, have I pleased you? Is there aught
I have forgotten? Are the garlands right?

The seats in order, and the company,

Bid as you told me? There's the music too,

Three fiddles—first and second, and a bass,

A hautboy, flute, and harp! Are you not pleased?

Look pleased! Do, Esther! Seldom do you smile
On me; and welcomer than Christmas day,
Or New-Year's day, or any day o' the year,
Were one kind look from Esther.

Esther. To say truth,
You have managed finely!

Hans. La! how sweet you smile!
What's honey now? I wouldn't take a hive
To pay for't with that smile. Indeed, I wouldn't,
In very deed, I wouldn't—and I'm fond
Of honey! furious fond of it. O dear!
A thing so sweet to see, what must it be
To taste? O happy days of boyhood, when
Whatever I did right was sure to get me
A kiss from my mother. Times are changed with Hans;
Do what he may, he gets no kisses now.

Esther. The boy wants me to kiss him!—So!—Good Hans,
'Tis not with men, you know, as 'tis with boys:
Kisses may come to boys, but men must fetch them.

Hans. But knew I, I could get them—I would fetch them!

Esther. Why, Hans, how can you know unless you try?

Hans. Unless I try!—Now mean you what you say?

Esther. Why say it else?

Hans. And they'll be had by fetching?

Esther. A fool may tell they'll not be had without.

Hans. O Esther!

Esther. Well!

Hans. Would I could hear thee say,
"O Hans!"

Esther. O Hans! There, I've said it!—Well?

Hans. Durst I but try? But then there is the fear!

Esther. And there's the hope! the flower beside the weed.

Hans. O Esther!—Oh.

Esther. O Hans!

Hans. Give me a kiss!

Esther. Fool!—said I not before,
Men must fetch kisses, though to boys they come?

Hans. O would you fancy me a boy!

Esther. I do;

Not only fancy thee, but know thee one!

Hans. Then treat me as a boy.

Esther. How?

Hans. As you said
Just now that boys were treated

Esther. As I live,
He'd have it come from me! What said I now?

Hans. You said that kisses come to boys.

Esther. I did;

And so do railings, cuffs, and fifty things
That are not half so sweet!—Did I not say
The dance was to be practised? Where are, then,
The partners? Where's the music? In a minute

The bridegroom comes, when all should be prepared,
Is that the time for making ready? Stand'st
With gaping mouth when busy hands are needed—
Fetch here the dancers and the music.

Hans. [*Without moving.*] Yes.

Esther. Is that the way to do it? Will they come
With only saying "Yes?" Art thou a post?

Hans. In sooth I know not what I am! I know
I'm not myself! I may be man or woman,
A fish or a brute beast, a stone, or log
Of wood, for what I care! I would 'twere now
All over with me, and the undertaker
Were working for me! It will come to that!
I'll do thy bidding—then I'll go and die—
I will! I'll tie a true true-lover's knot,
You'll see I will—Good-bye!—

Esther. [*Stamping.*] Hans!

Hans. Well?

Esther. Have here
The dancers, ere I stamp my foot again.

Hans. I fly.

[*Goes out.*]

Esther. Poor Hans! The boy is deep in love!
How have I managed to light up this flame?
"Heigho-ho!" "O dear!" The simpleton, I vow,
Grows interesting! I should grieve for Hans,
Were aught to happen to him. It is hard
To be the bane of a poor fellow's peace,
Much more to be the death of him! Should he go
And drown himself! or hang himself, indeed!
Hans! [*Calling*] I could never bear myself again!
To see him laid out in his shroud! Hans! Hans! [*Calling*]
To follow the poor fellow to his grave—
To see him lower'd into't.—Why, Hans! [*Calling*] I hear
The earth upon his coffin! Hans, I say!
Where are you?

Hans. [*Entering with dancers.*] Here! Is anything the matter,
You call'd me in a tone of such distress?

Esther. [*Recovering herself.*] Am I not in a hurry, and you
take

An hour and more to do a minute's work!

Hans. I'm sure I'm hardly gone a minute.

Esther. Fool!

You cannot tell a minute from an hour!

Hans. Here are the dancers and the music, but
One partner is a-wanting.

Esther. You stand up!

Hans. It is a woman's wanting.

Esther. 'Tis no matter,
Take you her place.

Hans. I'll do whate'er you bid me,
But 'tis too bad to make a woman of me.

Esther [*impatiently*]. Are you ready?

Hans. Yes! I'll dance him till I tire him.

[*Dance.* HANS exerts himself to the utmost, constantly looking towards ESTHER, who gradually becomes pleased, and still more and more enjoys his vivacity. His partner gives up, and HANS dances by himself before ESTHER, who humours his steps. The others at length dance off.

Hans. Danced I to please you?

Esther. Yes: and there your thanks. [Kisses him.

Hans. And there are yours for paying me so well!

[Kissing again.

Mars! if I haven't kiss'd her!

Esther. Hans! Why, Hans!

Hans. Nay, don't be angry! All the blame was yours; You kiss'd me first. 'Twas only kiss for kiss!

Esther. Here's some one coming! Why you idle boy! Nothing within, without the house, to do, That you keep standing here? No plate to clean? No knives and forks? no furniture to polish? No glasses nor decanters to be rinsed, And dried and clear'd? When put you last to rights Your pantry? 'Twas in wondrous order when I look'd into it yesterday! Go, sir!

A gaping mouth won't serve for busy hands!

To work, I say! Do you hear me, boy?

Hans. I do,
Yet hardly can believe it.

Esther. Hence. To work! [HANS goes out.

Mad. Ros. [*Entering.*] To work? Why, Esther 'tis a holiday! Knew you what you were saying? Do you hear me? Esther turn'd girl! May I believe my eyes— And they have never fail'd me yet—I saw thee Kiss the lad Hans just now?

Esther. 'Twas he kiss'd me.

Mad. Ros. You first kiss'd him.

Esther. Well, if I did, I did.
He danced just now, and pleased me, 'twas so well—
And so I kiss'd him, as a woman may
A boy!

Mad. Ros. You are right; you might have said a child:
Hans is no more.

Esther. Hans no more than a child?
He's twenty-five!—He says so, next birthday.
A pretty child indeed! If he's a child,
Children are marriageable! Such a child
My mother's husband was, when birth of me
Made him a father.

Mad. Ros. Be not angry, Esther;
I did not say of Hans he was too young
To be a husband—if you fancy him.

Esther. I fancy Hans? I fancy living man,
And Hans especially! I, that am gall

At very thought a man should be my master !
 I, to whom never ventured man to say
 Soft thing a second time—and those have tried
 Who have back'd furious seas, and shown a front
 To bayonet-points and loaded cannon-mouths—
 And I to fancy Hans ! I thank you, ma'am.
 Dress up a girl in boy's clothes for me, do,
 And send her me for husband ! Hans indeed
 To call me wife ! I to call Hans my husband !
 How I should like to hear myself ! I'll marry
 When it rains husbands !—but it shan't be Hans !

Mad. Ros. Well, Esther, do not fret.

Esther. I fret ? I think
 I see myself ! Fret about Hans ! I know
 You only jested. 'Twas a rare conceit
 To say I'd marry Hans. [*Laughs.*] I'll kill myself
 With laughing at the thought. Esther to marry—
 And Hans, of all mankind !

Mad. Ros. You are right. 'Twas jest !
 I have always set you down for an old maid.
 Go see if Meeta's ready.

Esther. [*Aside.*] An old maid !
 Thank Heaven, I'm only five-and-thirty yet.
 Old maid indeed, and only thirty-five !
 I yet may live to be a grandmother !

[*Goes out.*]

Mad. Ros. No sign of Rupert yet, and noon is past.
 He will not come. These nuptials will be stopp'd.
 Her father's summons boded, as I thought,
 No good. There is in the affairs of life,
 As in the atmosphere, a season, where
 To shining day succeedeth shining day ;
 But once the weather breaks, 'tis cloud and cloud,
 And long-deferr'd and slow, the clearing up !

Enter Messenger with letters, and retires.

From Rupert ! I was right—he will not come :
 The field is ta'en a month before the time.
 His leave has been recall'd ! Poor Meeta ! Go
 Undress thee, girl ! Thy gear of every day
 Belongs to this, on which thou thought'st to wear
 The brightest suit that virginhood puts on !
 This is to Meeta—from her father ? No—
 The hand is strange ! Why, who should write to her
 Except her father ? About whom but him,
 Or Rupert should she hear, and he has told
 His errand in my letter ! If it speaks
 About her father, harm has fall'n upon him !
 And how will Meeta bear it ? Firm of mind—
 Yet with a heart, so quickly tender, how
 Support the news of evil fall'n on him !
 What can have chanced ? Perhaps imprisonment !

Not death? O no! not death! It cannot be!
 Heaven, for his child's sake—for his own—will spare him.
 [Goes out.]

SCENE II.—MEETA'S *Dressing-room*.

MEETA and ESTHER enter—the former abstracted, the latter making a bridal knot.

Esther. No favour for your breast! A bride, and go
 To church without a favour! Well! to think,
 Of all things, *that* should be forgot! Almost
 As well forget your wedding-day itself!
 Almost as well no wedding as no favour!
 Know'st thou not so? [Touching her.]

Meeta. What said you to me, Esther?

Esther. There! I protest, as well it were the wall
 I spoke to as to you! as much 'twould hear me!
What said you to me, Esther? Esther said—
 It was your wedding-day—that you forgot
 A favour for your breast—that she would make one—
 And here 'tis ready! Let me pin it on.

Meeta. No word yet from my father!

Esther. From your father?
 Your lover, don't you mean?

Meeta. I mean my father!

Esther. Humph! Give me anything but want of nature!
 I do not like you, Meeta! Flesh and blood
 Are flesh and blood! Were it *my* wedding-day,
 Almost the very hour, and every minute
 The bridegroom look'd for, would my thought be running
 Upon my father? To be honest, Meeta,
 I'd think of something dearer—that I would,
 And be a good child still!

Meeta. You lost your father
 When you were but an infant. You don't know
 What 'tis to love a father.

Esther. Do I not?
 Yes; but I do! It is to honour him,
 So we are bidden—that is, to obey him—
 Respectfully entreat him!

Meeta. Nothing more?

Esther. What more?

Meeta. O, much!—O, very much!—Such things
 We do to those that are indifferent to us,
 Compared to a father! There is something more—
 Better—less earthly—more o' th' grain of Heaven—
 A love that's indefinable!—that holds
 Ourselves as nothing, in respect of cherishing!
 That's ever kneeling though no limb be bent,
 And looking up with ever-watching will,
 Anticipating wishes!—It is worship—

Although no lip be moved, no eye be strain'd,
 No hands be clasp'd—next that which hath acceptance
 Above—O' the soul! O, how I love my father!
 To say "before my life" is to say nothing—
 That's his, and 'tis a gasp and over! but
 To slave, beg, starve for him—forego possession
 Of mine own dearest earthly wishes—havings—
 I'd do it, Esther, in a moment!—Yes!
 Not give't a second thought! Remember'st thou
 I once was froward with thee? I was then
 A girl not ten years old—dost not remember?
 I had found a hair of his—a long white hair,
 And I had coil'd it up to treasure it;
 But thou didst flout me for't and take't away,
 And cast into the fire—whence all your might
 It took to hold me. Yes, I would have thrust
 My hand into the fire to save that hair!
 That is to love a father!

Esther. If it is,

Then know I not what 'tis to love a father!

Meeta. You never knew one, said I not before?
 But mine was twice a parent—that is, Esther,
 He was my father and my mother too.
 I never knew my mother, but I am sure
 I should have loved her—dearly loved her, Esther;
 But my father—nurse was he to me, instructor,
 Playmate, companion, father—all, together!
 Think of that, Esther. Playmate! Such a man
 To bend into a child for my sake! There
 I half believe I find the root of love
 Which has struck deepest.—He to play the child
 With his white hairs!—There is not one of them
 But has a heart and soul in't—to me, Esther!—
 Don't smile—You know you own you cannot tell
 What 'tis to love a father.

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Mad. Ros. Meeta!

Meeta. Well,

Dear Madame Roselheim?

Mad. Ros. The post is in.

Meeta. And Rupert doesn't come?—I thought 'twould
 be so!

I was prepared for it! I wish'd it—though
 My father will'd our nuptials should go on.
 'Tis well! O, if there be one hour, which more
 Than any other craves a parent's presence,
 'Tis that which gives his child away from him!
 She should go with his blessing, warm upon her, breathed
 With an attesting kiss; then may she go
 With perfect hope, and cheerly take with her

The benisons of all kind wishers else!—
You know I love your son?

Mad. Ros. [*Weeps.*] I know it, well,
My Meeta.

Meeta. Madam!—Mother! I'm the bride—
You must not weep till I do!—'Tis not fair,
I'll not be beat in disappointment, I
That have chief cause to feel it! Is he ill?

Mad. Ros. No!—No!

Meeta. Thank Heaven! and yet some other cause
As grave as that of health, perhaps, prevents him?

Mad. Ros. No; the campaign has open'd—nothing more.

Meeta. Enough!—Long marches—nightly guards—chill
sleeping

In the open fields—foragings—reconnoiterings—
Skirmishings—stormings and pitch'd battles! Rupert,
Poor Rupert! [*Weeps.*]—Mother, I am quits with you,
There are my tears 'gainst yours!

Mad. Ros. I wasn't weeping
For Rupert, Meeta.

Meeta. For whom, then?—My father?

Mad. Ros. For no one—that is, there's no cause I know of
Why I should weep.

Meeta. Why weep then?

Mad. Ros. 'Twas a fear
I had—

Meeta. About my father?—Is that letter
For me? The one unopen'd?—Give it me! don't fear.
Though I'm a girl, I have a resolution. [*Reads letter.*
Read it! [*Handing it to* MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Mad. Ros. Arrested! and a prisoner
In Prague!—His fate uncertain—but his life
In peril, Meeta! [*Tottering as on the point of fainting.*

Meeta. [*Trying to recover her.*] Mother!—Madam!—
Madam!—

Mother!—Madame Roselheim, don't give way!—these things
Are catching, and I want to be myself!

I must be myself—I will be myself!—I'll not waver,

Flinch, droop, the matter of a moment.—Madam!

I have need of all the nerve I have—and help me!

Don't take it from me!—My father wants it all,

And he must have it, and shall!—Well, well! give way!

The more you are water, the more will I be rock!

I am so!—Let me see—

Mad. Ros. My child!—my Meeta!

Thou show'st it not; but, if I feel the shock,

What must it prove to thee!

Meeta. Nothing, madam!—nothing!

Let's see—How many miles is Prague from this?

I recollect—that's right!—that's right!—I have

My senses all about me—I thank Heaven!

The paper that he gave me?—It is here—

In my bosom!—I remember everything!
I am quite myself!

Mad. Ros. Meeta! this calmness frights me!

Meeta. Don't mind it!—All is well!—I recollect,
To every syllable, all my father told me!
And I will do his bidding.—A fine time
'Twould be for me to swoon! [*Laughs*!—a proper time! [*Laughs*.
I must not laugh; for if I do, I'm lost!
Heaven give me firmness!—Of myself, I'm nothing!
There!—'tis gone off. I'll but provide myself,
And away! [*Going towards her chamber.*

Mad. Ros. Where go you, Meeta?

Meeta. To my chamber, madam!

Mad. Ros. What go you there to do?

Meeta. To change my dress.

Mad. Ros. But, Meeta!—

Meeta. Mother, let me have my way!—
Don't hinder me, and do not follow me!
Else, that may come you would not wish to happen!
Command me, after, all my life, so now
You suffer me be mistress of myself! [*Goes out.*

Mad. Ros. She makes me tremble—she's so little moved!
Why, Esther! are you too about to swoon?

Esther. Almost I am!—My heart turn'd sick just now;
But it grows better.

Mad. Ros. What do you think of Meeta?

Esther. I wonder at her—but she's all a wonder!
Had you but heard her talk, ere you came in,
About her father!—

Mad. Ros. I'm afraid of her.
She is too calm—it is unnatural!—
She cannot be herself, thus to sustain
What taxes you and me, too much, to whom
It comes not half so home!—She has not shed
A tear!—No sound of suffering—a moan,
A sigh—a breath, you could mistake for one—
Has 'scaped her! She forbade me follow her;
But am I right to heed her? Reason is gone,
Ere you suspect that it has given way;
So this collectedness may be but crust,
Not substance; which, while you believe't to be,
Straight crumbles into dust! We should not leave her
Alone.

Esther. I heed her not!—I'll follow her! [*Going.*

Meeta. [*Entering.*] Where are you going, Esther?

Esther. Into your chamber,
To look for you.

Meeta. Well!—here I am!—What want you?

Esther. Why, you are dress'd as 'twere to go a journey!

Meeta. I am.

Mad. Ros. And whither go you, Meeta?

Meeta. To
My father!

Mad. Ros. Are you mad?

Meeta. I could be mad!

But I must keep my reason—and I will!

Mad. Ros. Reflect you on the distance?

Meeta. 'Tis a stride!

Mad. Ros. A stride! And do you calculate
The danger?

Meeta. There's no danger—none, but that
In which he lies!

Mad. Ros. You may be stopp'd by robbers!

Meeta. There are no robbers.

Mad. Ros. Recollect the war!

Meeta. There is no war.

Mad. Ros. Know'st thou what thou art saying?

Meeta. I do,—Believe it! 'Tis the shortest way.
Thou'lt have to take't at last!

Esther. She shall not stir.

Meeta. Nay, but I will!—and go!

Mad. Ros. Don't let her, Esther;
Lay hold upon her.

Esther. Will I not!

Meeta. You will not!—
You must not!—dare not! If you do, his blood
Lie at your door!

Mad. Ros. Alas! what power have you
To help him, child?

Meeta. My will!—Where there's the will,
You cannot tell but there may be the power!
Strong will can make a little power go far—
At least, can I not beg his enemies
To spare his life?

Mad. Ros. You'll find their hearts are stone.

Meeta. Perhaps; but I shall try to prove them flesh.

Mad. Ros. And if thou prove they are not?

Meeta. Then, I'll deal
With his prison bolts and bars. Mother, 'tis vain!
Prevent me now, and I will 'scape again;
If not to-day, to-morrow. If not then,
The next day—or the following. So time
That's precious—everything—is lost, and, then,
The mischief done, and no good come of it
That might have come, were time used promptly! Madam—
Mother,—'tis reason, plain to speculation,
As the hand I lift before you now to Heaven
To register my vow, that no regard
Of difficulty, or unlikelihood,
Or danger, or persuasion, or enforcement,
Shall hold me back one moment from the attempt
To save my father's life. Heaven bless you, madam!
Esther, good-bye! That's right—No weeping—Nothing
But a kiss, and part!—Good-bye!—Good-bye!—Good-bye

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in JOSEPH'S House at Prague.**Enter JOSEPH and AHAB.**Ahab.* More gold!

Jos. Yes, Ahab, more! The dross is mine,
 Thou only hast the custody, and yet
 Thou yield'st it me, as it were drops of blood
 From thine own heart! I say I want more gold,
 And more to follow, yet, if that suffice not;
 And failing gold, I'll coin my parchments, plate,
 Jewels, and furniture—my very roof—
 But I shall find supplies!

Ahab. And for a Christian?

Jos. Thou art my brother-Jew. What couldst thou more
 Than risk thy life for mine?

Ahab. I do not know
 What greater venture man can risk for man,
 Than his own life.

Jos. Wouldst thou risk thine for me?
 Thou art honest, Ahab, though thou lov'st thyself
 Better than any living thing beside.
 Thou pausest to consider! Do not pause,
 'Tis waste of time, which I will save thee. Ahab,
 Thou wouldst not risk thy life for me. Now mark,—
 When I suffer'd persecution, Ahab,
 Ten years ago, in Spain,—where Christian men
 In their Master's name, did that which never yet
 Their Master's precepts warranted—I say it,
 For it is written, Ahab, written plain,
 That he who runs may read—when Christian men
 Gave human, living flesh to roast, because
 We held the old faith and eschew'd the new,—
 The Christian father of this Christian child
 Then saved my life at peril of his own!—
 Get the gold, Ahab! He did that for me,
 That was not of his creed, thou wouldst not do,
 Who holdest it! Ahab, I, then, believed
 The Master taught them right! He is my neighbour
 That does a neighbour's office unto me!
 The gold, and plenty on't—a hundred ducats!

Ahab. A hundred ducats?

Jos. 'Tis the twentieth part
 Of what remains! A *portion* of his life
 He did not risk, but *all*. Resolve at once
 To do my bidding, else my mind may change,
 And I may bid thee fetch the whole,—the whole!
 A prompt compliance, in a strait, is best.

Where others have the power to make conditions !
 Resistance tires forbearance ! Fetch the gold,
 For the sake of him who saved the hands that made it
 From the fire.—Look here ! they are not cinders, Ahab,
 But flesh ; and thank a Christian. Fetch the gold !

[AHAB goes out.]

Poor girl ! how she has wasted since she first
 Came here : yet how her spirit lasts, beyond
 Her body : there she suffers no impairment !
 My Rachel had been like her, had she lived,—
 The face reminds me of her, as it shines
 From the thick bower of her raven hair,
 When, now and then, by chance, I see it down !

Enter MEETA.

What news, my girl ?

Meeta. None !—I have sped to-day
 As yesterday ! The names of “father,”—“child,”
 Seem here to carry, to men’s hearts, no import
 Past that of lightest words. They hardly win
 An audience for me ! When they do, the eye
 Of the listener, every other moment caught
 By passing trivial’st things, admonishes
 My tongue it only wastes an earnest suit
 Upon a heedless ear. Once, as I thought,
 My auditor was moved,—almost he seem’d
 To give me hope,—I felt as if about
 To cross the threshold of the prison, and
 Blessings and thanks rose in my throat so thick,
 That utterance quite fail’d me, and, except
 For tears, that sudden came to my relief,
 I had fallen at his feet,—yet at that very moment
 Some antic, feat I saw not, but a wretch
 Practised within his view, convulsed him straight
 With laughter, ’mid the peals of which he left me,
 As I had ne’er been standing there ! A clap
 Of thunder had not stunn’d me half so much.

Jos. Was’t a new warden ?

Meeta. Yes.

Jos. Corrupt his heart,
 With pity at the door to thrust it back,
 And let the mood, it shrinks from, enter in !

Meeta. They are all alike ! See. [*Showing an empty purse.*]

Jos. Thou hast emptied it ?

Well, I can fill it again !

Meeta. All gone, and naught
 To show for it : a heart-full, too, of prayers !

Jos. I fear there is no hope !

Meeta. Don’t say it ! Though
 For so far we have found men’s hearts but stones,
 Still will we turn them up. It cannot be
 But we shall light on one that’s flesh and blood.

I won't believe it! Yea, though from my hand
The hundred thousandth one dropp'd dead as flint,
I'd go to the next as though the human touch
Might meet me there! No! while my father lives,
I'll ne'er give up the hope to save his life!

Jos. A girl—and proof against despondence thus!

Meeta. I often fear you deem me hard of heart.
Perhaps you think I do not weep enough?
It is not that I could not weep—it is
That I *won't* weep—that I won't give way—that I'll keep
My spirit up—my thoughts about me—waste
Naught that my father wants! I can't afford
To be a child and melt. No! I must be
A deliverer, and, to dissolvment, proof
As a rock. I have not shed a single tear
But as a prayer—except to-day, when I gasp'd,
And must have wept or dropp'd, and even then
It came of itself! Thou saidst just now thou fear'dst
There was no hope? But there is! I came resolved
To keep it from thee, promise had so oft
Enticed belief to balk it. I have a chance
To see the daughter of the Governor.

Jos. How came this blessed chance?

Meeta. Ha! blessed, say'st thou?—
Perhaps 'twill prove so!—The poor human heart,
How it doth build, and build on slightest grounds!
Words dropp'd by chance 'twill take for prophecies!
We'll pray it may be bless'd—We, then, may hope for't!
Well, I *will* tell you.

Jos. Hope begins to dawn!

Meeta. Didn't I say there was no fear of hope?
I went, as every day I yet have done,
To the Governor's. The man that oped the gate
Was a new warder. A new face, new hope!
I told my tale; and, when 'twas done, implored him
Prefer my poor petition to his lady,
To grant me briefest audience.

Jos. To the daughter
Of the Governor?

Meeta. To her!

Jos. I see: go on!

Meeta. Like all the rest, he show'd—not plainly though,
But by a hint—that charities were things
Of cost, and must be bought with more than thanks.
My purse was officeless, my last balk'd suit
Had of its trust absolved it quite—a wretch
Who bragg'd, to win my bribe, a power he had not,
And added savage mockery to the wrong!
I pleaded destitution. "What," he cried,
"No toy, no trinket, you could turn to coin!"
And rudely snatching from its place my hood,
Which I had just unloosed, for want of air—

"Ha!" he exclaim'd, "what costly treasure's this!"
As, by the action from its band released,
My hair fell all around me!

Jos. Thereof make they
High traffic. I have known a head of hair,
Of ordinary goodness, to bring
A common peasant maid a little dower!
There scarce were price a woman might not set
On one so rich as thine.

Meeta. Indeed! I would
I then had known its value—I had made
A surer bargain.

Jos. Durst he ask it of thee?
Wretch! He shall never have it! Thou shalt take
A purse of ducats to him.

Meeta. It is his
Already. With my leave he sever'd it,
As only 'twere the string that held it up,
And, glad, I gave it to him.

Jos. I, at hand,
To fill thy purse! A quarter of an hour
Had ta'en thee here and back.

Meeta. And in that time
His mind had changed, or he had been removed,
And in his place another put, and all
Had been to do again, and that, perhaps
With lessen'd chance.—Had he ask'd me for a limb,
He had had it—had it!—not one precious moment
Had I stay'd haggling with him. It had gone
As the hair of my head—ay—as a single hair.
'Tis time I go——

Enter AHAB.

Ahab. Despatches have arrived.

Meeta. They bring the order for my father's death.
I see it! Say it. You cannot tell me worse
Than I know.

Ahab. The news is bad.

Meeta. I'll not give up
While there is chance the substance of a thread—
A film! Although a thousand emperors
Had sworn to take the life of his grey hairs,
While it is in them, I will try and save it!

Jos. Thou lookest faint! Some wine will hearten thee.

Meeta. I'll have no wine but such as I draw hence,
From my heart! There's not such wine in all thy house
To strengthen me! There's plenty, and to spare!
What time is he to die?

Jos. Tell her. No use
Withhold it from her. Her spirit is the arch
Which gaineth strength by that which burdens it.

Ahab. He is to die within three days, although

The Governor his case reported so,
It might have gain'd for him a milder doom.

Meeta. Did he? Did the Governor? Did you say
The Governor his case reported kindly?
The Governor? he?—he that's here?—here now
In Prague?—the very Governor of Prague?

Ahab. The same; but some severe reverse, 'tis said,
Our arms have met with, so have overcast
The imperial mind, that clemency is quench'd,
And thus thy father's death, alas, decreed!

Meeta. I would be here, and twenty leagues from this.

Jos. Why twenty leagues from this?

Meeta. That distance lives
A friend might give me help.

Jos. Then suffer me
To be thy second self, and see that friend.

Meeta. He is an enemy to Prague.

Jos. And Prague
An enemy to thee—and I'm thy friend!
Trust me, my child.

Meeta. My father told me this,
O thou good man—Thou Christian!—Pardon me.

Jos. Pardon thee, child? I thank and honour thee:
Thou canst not praise me more than call me that
Thy heart esteemeth best.

Meeta. Then come with me,
And I'll instruct thee on the way. 'Tis time
I see the servant of the Governor.
Three days we have from this—That's three whole days—
He dies on Saturday—[*Ruminating*—He shall not die!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the GOVERNOR'S.*

Enter BARON IDENSTEIN and ADOLPHA.

Iden. Indeed, indeed, it was not wisely done!
'Tis wrong that pity should be sufferer
By her sweet nature, as she is, enduring
Its gentle throes in vain—which are relieved
When of avail to those for whom they're borne;
Else, pain incontinently! 'Twas not right
To promise audience to her, her affliction
Past help! What canst thou give her but thy tears?
And what are they? They cannot ope for her
Her father's prison-door, nor wash away
The writing of the warrant which decrees
His term of life. Thou shouldst have sent her word
"It could not be"—"It was of no avail."
'Twas rending thy own heart, without repair
Of hers! 'Twas idle waste of agony!
'Twas feeding hope thou knew'st was sure to die!

Adol. Is there no hope?

Iden. There! Were it fate herself
Said "No," thy sanguine nature would not rest,
But ask again with thought she'd change her mind.
His doom is fix'd—within three days, he dies.

Adol. On Saturday?

Iden. Yes; Saturday's the day.

Adol. Take me from Prague! I would not be in Prague
That day! I see the reverend old man
Dragging along the street, as on the day
I saw him first—by accident approaching
The casement as he pass'd!—his silver'd head
Uncover'd, an unseemly sight, beset,
As 'twas, by fierce array of threatening arms,
In hands wherein the pith of life was fresh,
Which better, far, it had become to give
Protection to him than oppose offence.
'Twas only for a moment, but the form
Of the old man has never left me since.
I will not be in Prague the day he dies;
I wish I could forget when that day comes!—
What day is this!—When will be Saturday!
O to have time, 'twixt this and after then,
A blank, that I might pass that cruel day,
Nor know on't till 'twas gone!

Iden. My sweet Adolpha,
A strange and wondrous compound is thy heart,
Frame of all moods, from gravest to most light;
And all in like extreme! Thy mirth defies
All other wing!—Thy sadness dives a depth
Where none can follow thee! No eye such stores
Of tears! No cheek such treasury of smiles!
Most natures have their bias, thine hath none,
Save goodness which directs and poises all!
My love! thou shalt not be in Prague, that day.

Adol. But *must* it come?

Iden. See there again! Thy heart
Will take no answer, save what pleases it;
And, yet, is positive, as well as I,
It cannot have.

Adol. My father's Governor!

Iden. The Emperor is his master.

Adol. Let him be!

Were I my father, in a case like this,
I would gainsay the Emperor!—refuse
To do his bidding, or evade obedience—
Do anything but take the old man's life!
'Tis murder, Idenstein! He was no spy!—
Came on no hostile mission!—nothing did
Could threaten damage to the Emperor's cause—
Only fulfill'd an act of private duty,
To her whom once he served! Why should he die

For that? What reason that a giant hand
Be laid on him to crush him to the grave!
A breach of duty were true duty here,
Where duty, done, is breach of all things, else.
For all thou say'st, I can't believe he'll die,
Knowing, as I know, he has no right to die.
I'll see my father.

Iden. Counsel treason to him?

Adol. That is not treason, which is not unright! [*Goes out.*]

Iden. Her virtuous will, will never own a let;
What it desires, she ever counts upon
The power to do. [*Listens.*] Ha!—Now she pleads to him.
That were well urged, if earnestly were well!—
I do not hear his answer, but by the tone
'Tis "No!" She comes to the attack again!
A friend in need, Adolpha, with a chance
In thy favour—Here thou hast none!—Again, I guess
His answer by the tone!—He will not yield—
Nor still will she give up—No advocate
Like one that pleads with heart!—What! Tears?—I'm sure
She weeps!—This rain, Adolpha, won't avail!
Duty's a stern defendant; thou must lose
Thy suit:—Here comes the governor!—Kind heart!
What sun is there!—No cloud can keep it out;
But, lower it ne'er so thick, some beam breaks through.

Enter GENERAL KLEINER.

Gen. Kle. I can't endure it!—won't—Give me a siege,
With a starved garrison and gaping breach!
Foundations honeycomb'd with mines!—the foe
A hundred men to one!—Or give me a battle
With bayonets cross'd, and cannon, mouth to mouth,
And I'm myself! I know my duty, and
Can act the man!—But save me from the eyes
Of a woman, when she weeps, and I the cause,
And cannot stop her tears!—'Sdeath! would they drown me,
I'd thank them! In the name of patience, why
Cannot one make a woman list to reason?
Why does that drive her mad which keeps us sane?
Talk reason to her, and her wits are gone!
'Sdeath! I can govern Prague; but not a woman!

Iden. Why, what has happen'd, General?

Gen. Kle. Don't call
Me General!—call your wife General!—she knows
My duty better than I know it myself!
Tell her of customs, order, penalties,—
You talk of things that she can treat as the thread
She cuts with her hus'ife scissors! I have served
For fifty years—for more than half that time
Have managed men by units, tens, and hundreds,
And tens of hundreds!—I can't rule a woman!

Rule her?—That's not the question!—Would it were!
She must rule me!

Iden. But what's the matter?

Gen. Kle. Matter?

That wife of yours—that girl—that waxen doll—
Adolpha! Is she not your wife; and don't
You know it? Did you ever say her "nay,"
And prosper?—ever know her to give up
The point her heart was fix'd on? She'd make hay
In December! Mars—a profitable wife!
She'd have the Helder thaw with a north wind
In January, when the frost is biting
With all its teeth! She'd stop the tide half in,
When it runs strongest. She would stop the sun,
The moon, and all the stars!

Iden. What has she done, sir?

Gen. Kle. Desired me ope the prison-door that's shut
By the Emperor's order—let its tenant out—
Laugh at the warrant for his death, that's seal'd
By the Emperor's hand! When I refuse her that—
Which, did I grant her, I should lose my head,
And that were falling somewhat grievously
Short of my due proportions—she insists
Upon a respite, while she goes herself
To plead his cause before the Emperor!
She'd do it! And when I refuse her that,
She prays me set my wits to work, and pass
A fiction off for fact—not killing him,
Although he seem to die! She'd make me out
A necromancer! When she's balk'd of that—
Which on as valid reason I refuse
As one to weave with gyves upon his hands,
She opens on me volleys of loud sobs,
With showers of tears, that try my mettle more
Than hail of lead! I wish you'd rule your wife—
Cut her right short, when she's unreasonable—
Say "No" to her, and nothing else for a year!
You spoil her, Idenstein!—A woman never
Should have her own way!

Iden. Sir, you gave it her
Before I did.

Gen. Kle. A fool, sir, has a use!
He is a beacon to a man, that's wise
Enough to profit by him.

Iden. All her fault
Is but excess of too sweet nature, sir,
Which ever makes another's griefs her own.

Gen. Kle. And mine, too! Punishment is done away
In Prague! Offenders 'scape, or I must smart
For their penalties! Nor ends it there. No ache,
For ten miles round, but I must share a twinge,
Chance it to come unto her knowledge!—I

Expire with woes of orphans, widows, maids
Forsaken, wives in childbirth—all degrees
Of human, female sufferings—I am *in*
Articulo mortis, every day of my life,
And not a pang my own!

Iden. And then you die, sir,

A good man's death with benisons all round you!

Gen. Kle. I'd waive the benisons to 'scape the death!

Iden. Indeed—I know you better, sir!—you would not.

Gen. Kle. I would!—But who comes here?

Iden. As I believe,

The daughter of the prisoner, sir. Adolpha

Has promised her an audience.

Gen. Kle. We are attack'd

In flank and rear—Tell her it won't avail!

Persuade her to retreat! Say we have taken

Our ground, and we will keep it, stand or fall!

Iden. Had not you better do it, sir?

Gen. Kle. Not I!

I'm a recruit, against their mode of fighting.

[Retires hastily, and sits down near a table.]

Enter MEETA and a Servant.

Serv. [Speaking low to MEETA.] I'll tell her you are here.

[Goes out.]

Iden. You wish to see

The daughter of the Governor?

Meeta. I come

To see her. I am promised I should see her.

She said it, as I am inform'd,—indeed

As I am sure she did. She is a lady:

She cannot break her word. A noble lady,

She would not break her word! A lady, sweet

And pitiful—she will not break her word!

Iden. She will not; but I pray you for her sake,

Absolve her from it, and forego your suit,

Which will avail you nought. It will not lead

To what you want; what is the worth on't, then?

And wherefore shouldst thou urge it?

Meeta. I am come

To see the daughter of the Governor;

Come on her promise, as I have been told,

And thou just now hast granted. If she wills

To break her word, then as I came I go!

But if she waits for me to give it back,

She'll wait till I am dead—and then she's free,

As death solves all accounts.

Iden. Why give her pain;

And bootlessly?

Meeta. My father is in prison,

And he is doom'd to die within three days,

And I his child, with the faculty of speech,

Stand not acquitted if I hold my tongue ;
 But, could I find for it no audience else,
 Must make it ring to stones for mercy to him
 While yet he breathes ! how then should I be dumb
 To human hearts, that are not hard as stones—
 At least should not be so.

Iden. Leave me to plead
 Thy cause to her. Instruct me what thou'dst have,
 I'll urge it to her, and with reasons back
 Which thou wouldst never dream of,—be there but
 A glimpse of hope, I'll see it and point out,
 And make it clear to her, and if her heart
 Misgives her, I'll encourage her. I'm her friend—
 Her husband.

Meeta. You are not my father's child !
 You would give up, where I would still go on !
 That which would make me plead the heartier,
 Would silence you ! O, sir, in such a case,
 Would *you* petition for your father's life
 At second-hand ? But help me ! O do that !
 And I will pay you with a life of thanks !
 And pardon me that I reject your counsel.—
 I cannot take it, sir !—Indeed I cannot !
 My heart, and mind, and sense, are capable
 Of nothing but one thing—to try all means,
 However light or weighty, feasible
 Or unfeasible, rational, or wild, or mad,
 Allow'd or disallow'd—short of a stain
 Would spot my soul—to save my father's life !

Gen. Kle. 'Sdeath ! am I chain'd here, that would be hence,
 Yet lack the power to go !

Iden. The lady comes.
 So—speak to her, since you will have it so.

Enter ADOLPHA and Servant, who goes out.

This is the daughter of the prisoner.

Meeta. [*Running up to ADOLPHA, and kneeling.*] Bless thee !

Adol. Poor girl !—No ! Not thy knees !—Thy arms ! Here
 are mine.

Meeta. O no ! my knee ! my knee !—Or would you lift
 My body up, lift first my heart, that's low
 As misery can lay it ! I have a father,
 And he's in prison, and I must not see him.
 I am his only child, and I have travell'd
 Hundreds of miles, and when I reach the gate,
 'Tis shut on me, and human beings keep it !
 He dies on Saturday, and they can tell me
 I shall not see his living face again,
 And nothing has he done why they should kill him !
 Nothing !—no more than you have ! An old man
 With a pale brow, sweet face, and silver hair,
 That would not hurt a fly !—and he must perish,

And no one to console him, and his daughter
 Within the wall's breadth of him;—She must not touch him,
 See him, or speak to him!—You are a child!
 You have a father! Think of me and mine!
 Speak for me! Will you? Pray the Governor
 To bid him let me in and see him! Won't you?
 Are you going? Will you speak for me? Will you get them
 To let me see my father! Do—or here
 I'll lie at your feet for ever! [Falls prostrate.]

Gen. Kle. Idenstein,
 Can't you stop crying?

Iden. Sir, can you?

Adol. [Going to GENERAL KLEINER.] My father!

Gen. Kle. I'll not be shaken.

[Crossing her—she holds him on the other side, kneeling to him.]

Meeta. [Partly raising herself and missing ADOLPHA.] Has
 she gone to do it,

Or means she to escape me?—Ha! she's there

Kneeling to some one!—'Tis the Governor!

Mercy—O—mercy!

Gen. Kle. They are taking me
 By storm! The citadel is theirs! I see
 No use in holding out!—Eh! Idenstein?
 Must I surrender? She shall see her father!

[MEETA falls swooning at his feet—Picture—Scene drops.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Outskirts of GENERAL TORSTENSON'S Camp.*

Enter RODOLPH, GEROLD, LODOWICK, and others.—Soldiers dragging in JOSEPH.

Ger. He is a spy!

Lod. Drag him along to the guard.
 Let him be tried at once and executed.

Ger. Nay, kill him without trial. He's a Jew
 Blasphemer, reprobate, extortioner!

Jos. Nay, sirs; but hear me!

Rod. Hear him.—Let him speak.
 Give him fair play.

Ger. Fair play, and to a Jew!

Jos. You give a thief fair play—a murderer—
 And why not me, who neither kill nor steal?

Ger. Not steal!

Rod. Have patience!

Jos. Have I stolen from you?
 What have you lost, to lay to my account?

Is it your charity—I have it not ;
 But I will spare you some of mine ! Perhaps
 The stock to serve a Christian may be small,
 Yet such as 'tis, it would not let me use
 A Christian, though a thief or murderer,
 As you use me !

Ger. You hear him ! Leave him, sirs,
 To me. I'll do his business !

Jos. A brave man !

Ger. Leave him to me, sirs ; I account a Jew
 But as I would a rat !

Jos. Obey him, sirs.

Let go your hold of me, and loose the rat,
 Before that dog ! I have known a cur to turn
 Before as small a thing ! I mean it, sirs.
 But as you leave a rat to use his teeth,
 Nor arm the dog you set upon a rat,
 So that, whate'er the odds, 'tis bite 'gainst bite,—
 Give me equality of weapons too,
 Hand against hand, at large, and arm'd or not,
 And see, if, be the Jew indeed a rat,
 The Christian nearer doth approach the man !

Rod. The Jew has fairly said.

Jos. Will fairly do,
 Give him fair play ! Sirs, you are Christian men !
 A Christian father lies in jeopardy
 In Prague—a reverend teacher of your faith.
 Man hath summ'd up his days ; the number's out
 On Saturday, unless Heaven sends him aid ;
 He has an only daughter, who essays
 To succour him, and spies salvation here,
 But cannot come to bring't—a Christian too—
 So she must send for't ; and thereto employs
 A friend, whose counsel, coffers, roof, hands, blood,
 She has, and welcome too, at her command ;
 And Christian men—You, sirs !—won't suffer him
 To do her will, because he is a Jew !

Ger. We knew not this !

Jos. You would not know it, sirs !
 You would not hear me !—would not let me speak !
 Laid you not hands upon me one and all ?
 Vied you not in reviling me ? with death
 Did you not threaten me, nor till now give time,
 To put a word of deprecation in,
 Because I am a Jew !

Lod. We have wrong'd the Jew.

Ger. I fear we have:

Rod. Nay, sirs, I know we have,
 So let's ask pardon of the honest man.

Jos. Ask me no pardon—It is given, ere ask'd.
 A venial fault's atoned for, when 'tis own'd.
 And pray you, sirs, if you have friends yourselves—

As friends, however fenced in this world, lie
 Within the leap of danger—bring me straight
 To one call'd Roselheim, who beareth rank
 Among your forces.

Rod. Here the very man
 Comes, as he knew your need. You'll not complain?

Jos. I never break my word, although a Jew.

[*RODOLPH and the rest go out*]

Enter RUPERT, MADAME ROSELHEIM, and ESTHER.

Do I not speak to Major Roselheim?

Rup. You have named me, friend!

Jos. Thanks, sir, to call me so.

Rup. You have an errand for me—have you not?

Jos. Yes; but a messenger more welcome far
 Than I, this letter, sir, will tell it you—
 I say more welcome—though it brings bad news.

Mad. Ros. From Meeta, is it not?

Rup. Yes, mother.

Mad. Ros. What

Says Meeta?

Rup. Presently!—I'll tell you all
 Anon!

Mad. Ros. I read the letter in your face;
 The old man's doom is seal'd,—not quite, but yet
 Almost as sure?

Rup. You have guess'd it, mother.

Mad. Ros. Rupert,
 Is there no chance for him?

Rup. There is a chance.

Mad. Ros. What is't, my son?

Rup. I may not tell you, madam.

Mad. Ros. Were it a breach of confidence?

Rup. No, mother,—

Of duty only. Movements, which are language
 To a soldier, give me hopes, and these I am free
 To share with you, and do so—not their cause.

Mad. Ros. Tell me his plight in every circumstance.

Rup. Learn it in one, he dies within two days,
 Unless—

Mad. Ros. What, Rupert?

Rup. Learn the rest from hope!

Mother, you said the Governor of Prague
 Was schoolfellow and choice comrade of my father,
 From boyhood even to majority,—

That golden age of life, when hearts that join
 Are riveted by metal, weatherproof,

That shines and keeps, while those it holds decay.

You would have sent to him; nay, gone yourself;

But, save in extreme need, I would not have it.

Send now—indite a letter—state your claim,

And crave delay to the last fraction

Of time that duty will allow—and let
 Our Esther be the bearer, under guidance
 Of this good man. Come there no other profit,
 'Twill place her nearer Meeta—should she need her.
 She ne'er divines my care had conn'd this news. [Aside.
 Before this herald brought it.

Mad. Ros. Esther!

Esther. Madam?

Mad. Ros. Fear you to go to Prague?

Esther. To no place, madam,
 For you.

Mad. Ros. 'Tis with a letter to the Governor.

Esther. I'll take it, madam: I'll do anything
 To leave the camp.

Mad. Ros. Why, what's the matter, Esther?

Esther. That boy—that Hans, is going fast to ruin.
 Before they stop, they'll make a soldier of him.
 Already has he got their swagger, madam;
 Drinks, swears,—yes, madam, on my life he does!
 I'll never take the poor lad home again
 The simple thing he was.

Mad. Ros. Then, Esther, take
 The boy along with you.

Esther. I thank you, madam!—
 Not that I care for Hans; but innocence
 Is a rare thing, and should not be corrupted,
 While those who know its value can prevent it.
 So as you think it right that the poor lad
 Be placed in safety, while it can avail him,
 I'll take him with me, madam.

Mad. Ros. Do so, Esther;
 Go, find him straight, then come at once to me. [Goes out.

Rup. I have a charge for thee, concerning Meeta;
 But this at once—should any one you love
 Remain in Prague on Friday night, take care
 They keep the house. You understand me, Esther?

Esther. Humph! Yes, I think I do! But where is Hans?
 Upon my life, I quite forget myself
 With care for him. It fits not he and I
 Should go together, and be nothing more
 Than Hans and Esther! I have quite forgot
 Appearances. And what will people say?
 Here's a dilemma! If I leave the lad
 Behind me, he is ruin'd. They'll be putting,
 'Mongst other things, sweethearts into his head.
 And I am ruin'd if I take him with me,
 And he no right to me, nor I to him!
 I could not pass him for my brother—None
 Would credit that the selfsame mother bore us!
 'Tis out of nature he could be my son.
 What shall I do for sake of the poor lad?
 There's no contrivance I can hit upon,

But to make Hans my husband. Well-a-day !
To think that ever it should come to this ;
But, if it can't be help'd, as well be done
To-day as this day year. 'Tis very plain
I must be sacrificed, or Hans be lost,—
And that were cruelty—That must not be !
And so my mind's made up ! I'll marry him !

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Camp.*

Enter HANS and RODOLPH.

Hans. And you have been in battle ?

Rod. Yes.

Hans. How often ?

Rod. A dozen times.

Hans. And never got a wound ?

Rod. Only a scratch.

Hans. I would not mind a scratch,—
I would not mind a dozen scratches ! If
It went no further, bayonets and swords
To me were things I'd take no more account of
Than pins and needles. Where, though, was the scratch ?

Rod. In the left side—a bayonet grazed me there.

Hans. Odds, that was near ! Wasn't it ? Very near !
I should not mind one in the foot or leg,
The hand or arm—but when you come to that,
Fighting is very dangerous ! I don't think
That I should like to be a soldier.

Rod. Yet

You are the very cut of one.

Hans. The cut ?

Am I though ?

Rod. One could see it with half an eye.

Hans. It must be very plain.

Rod. You were intended,
By nature, for a soldier.

Hans. Isn't it strange
That nature never told me so ?

Rod. She left you
To find it out yourself, it is so plain.

Hans. And I to live to five-and-twenty years
And not to see it—No !—Nor any one
To tell me on't till you did !

Rod. Friends are few ;
One may go far ere find one.

Hans. Tell me what
You mean by the cut of a soldier, that hereafter
I know myself.

Rod. A sharp eye—a smart nose.

Hans. Have I such eye and nose ?

Rod. You have.

Hans. Indeed?

I never dreamt on't! I have a smart nose
And a sharp eye? Now would I give a crown
That this were told to Esther! So! Go on.

Rod. You have a pair of shoulders.

Hans. La! you jest!

Speak you the truth now? mean you what you say?
Have I indeed a pair of shoulders?

Rod. Yes.

Hans. 'Tis plain I never knew myself before!
A sharp eye, a smart nose, and pair of shoulders
I wonder what would Esther say to this!
Anything more?

Rod. Ay marry! many a thing.
A chest that's high and full—a front-rank chest.

Hans. Never mind that—I like the rear rank better.
Were I a soldier, I would always fight
In the rear rank—I could do wonders there—
Incredible and never-heard-of things!
What call you those who fight upon their knees
And stomachs, or ensconce themselves behind
Hedges and trees, and when the enemy
Advances, make a run of it, and leave
The rest to fight the battle out?

Rod. We call them
Sharp-shooters.

Hans. That's the very name! I'll be
A sharp-shooter. A sharp-shooter had need
Have a sharp eye, and I have one, you know:
Haven't I? I'm contented with a chest
That's high and full, but not a front-rank one:
And so a sharp-shooter if anything!
We've settled that—Go on—Were Esther here!
She little dreams that Hans is such a man!

Rod. Your limbs are set right under you.

Hans. They are? You do not say so?
And have I got straight legs with all the rest?
Odds what a man I am! I think I'll be
A soldier.

Rod. You'd be sure of it, but once
You saw yourself dress'd in your uniform.

Hans. 'Twould make a little change.

Rod. A little, say you!

'Twould make a hero of you.

Hans. I should like
To see myself a hero! What was that? [*A shot without.*

Rod. Only a shot.

Hans. O, was it nothing more?
A shot! I thought it was something else! Who minds
A shot?

Rod. 'Tis clear you do not.

Hans. No—not I!
I fired a shot once when I was a boy,
And kill'd a sparrow—as I live I did!
I to be startled by a shot! [*Shot again.*] Odds life!
That's shameful waste of powder, and in time
Of war too.

Rod. Here! put on this cap of mine,
And show me how you look in it.

Hans. I please you?

Rod. Gods, sir, you make a show more warlike far
Than would a whole platoon with shoulder'd arms
And bayonets fix'd.

Hans. What were I did you add
My body to my head!

Rod. To go by rule,
You would be worth a regiment! How fine
Your eye looks when it rolls! Here, take my sword
And flourish it.

Hans. What think'st me match to now?

Rod. A whole brigade—Foot—Horse—Artillery,
To sweep a field!

Hans. I'll be a soldier.

ESTHER—entering and aside.

Esther. Hans!

Rod. Then take the bounty.

Esther. Take it if he dares!

Hans. I never said I'd take it.

Rod. But you said
You'd be a soldier.

Hans. Yes; with Esther's leave.

Esther. O! was it so?—What do you with that cap?
Take't off, or I will put one on your head
Will fit it better! Flourishing a sword!
Have you a mind the boy should cut himself,
You man of war?—Give back the sword and cap.
Sir, you may sell your own limbs if you like,
You know the worth of them; but for the lad's,
They're not his own; and not for market, sir.

Rod. And is the bargain off?

Hans. And don't you hear
What Esther says?—It were a valiant man
Would gainsay her!—I would not for my head!

Rod. [*Looking alternately at ESTHER and HANS.*] I see!

Hans. We'll talk of it another time
When she's not by.

Rod. [*To ESTHER.*] Well I'll let off the lad,
So that I get a kiss?

Hans. [*Placing himself between them.*] You get not that!
Nay, an I die for it, you get not that!
Nay, an you come with swords and bayonets,
Bullets and cannon-balls, you get not that!

Esther. Hans is a man!—Take my advice, and know [*To Rod.*
A lion without proving of his fangs.
Touch me! and better for you you had been
In prison-keeping than at large to-day.
Man never kiss'd me yet, sir.

Hans. Only Hans.

Esther. Nor e'er shall kiss me, sir!

Hans. Save I'm the man.

Esther. I like a smirking swaggering turkey-cock,
That eyes a woman, as he need but look
And swallow her!

Rod. I'll see your spark again.

[*Goes out.*

Esther. See he don't prove a fire and scorch you, sir!
Hans, you have acted like a man to-day,
You're a good lad; but you were never made
Match for a world like this, to get through it,
By yourself.—A pity 'tis you have not aunt,
Sister, nor mother, that would look to you,
Nor honest woman that might serve for such,
And, maybe, love you better!

Hans. Esther!—Esther!

Esther. Why, bless me, Hans! you're always saying that,
'Tis very plain there's something you would have,
But what that something is, not quite so clear;
Speak out, Hans, and take heart—I cannot read
The stars, you know; I'm not a conjurer,
Or a diviner, or a doctor, who
Finds hidden ailments out. I'm nothing but
An honest simple woman, that would do
A kind turn for thee, knew she but the way;
So want'st thou anything, speak out, good Hans.

Hans. I want a wife.

Esther. You do not say so!

Hans. Yes,

I do.—Now, wanted you a husband, Esther,
How well we should be match'd!

Esther. I want a husband!—

But, then, you want a wife—that makes a change:
And though I do not want a husband, Hans,
Yet I might bring myself, you know, to take one,
To save the wits or life of a poor lad
Like you, that has no mother, sister, aunt,
To look to him! Know you where bides the chaplain
O' the regiment?

Hans. I do.

Esther. I'll talk with him.

Do you not lead the way?

What, are you not in haste to get a wife?

I thought you were.

Hans. I am; but am so pleased,
I know not what to do!—to go or stay,
To laugh or cry, to talk or hold my tongue.

Esther. Poor honest lad ! A pity 'twere the world
Should take thee in ! Thou ought'st to have a wife,
If but to look to thee ! 'Twould not be right
To leave thee without one, a day, an hour ;
And such a friend as I'm to thee, at hand.
Would it, Hans ? The poor lad ! he's quite confounded !
How interesting does he look !—Come, Hans !
You know the way to the chaplain's—I believe—
I think—I'm almost sure I'll take you, Hans !
[*They go out, ESTHER leaning upon him.*]

SCENE III.—*The Fortress of Prague—A Room.*

Gen. Kleiner [without]. Wait you without.
Adol. [without]. We will, sir.
Gen. Kle. [without]. Idenstein,
Keep guard upon her.
Iden. [without]. There's no need, sir.
Gen. Kle. No—
A wife most docile—let her have her way !
[*Enters with the* LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR.
Bring here the prisoner. Do not say 'tis I
That want to see him, nor apprise him how
I am accompanied— [LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR *goes out.*
I had hoped this task
Would have been wholly spared me,—so relapse
Of consciousness succeeded to relapse,
When nature once gave way, till nearly half
The interval that spares him life was out.
But she recovers and at once demands
Fulfilment of my word.—What now my course ?
A veteran take the field without a plan—
Or take the field at all with mutiny
In the ranks ! How come I here ? What brought me here ?
A regiment of foot, or horse, or what ?
Can I believe I came of mine own will ?
With aid of mine own limbs, when I would be
A thousand miles away ? I must be mad,—
I, that can't bear to see a caged bird !
Mad for a hundred ducats ! I would give
That sum—ay, twice as much, to any one,
Would bind me hand and foot and take me hence !
[*Re-enter* LIEUTENANT, with MUHLDENAU.
Lieut. The prisoner.
Gen. Kle. Leave us, good Lieutenant. [LIEUTENANT *goes out.*] Sir—
Muhl. Your pleasure ?
Gen. Kle. Pleasure, sir ? I have no pleasure !
I'm an unhappy man, that with the power
To do his pleasure, cannot do it, sir.

I know the track I ought to take, and would,
 Yet always go the way that's contrary.
 Sir, were a fever next door to me, and
 I knew removing further would prevent me
 From taking it, I would remove next door !
 There is in some men a fatality
 That knowledge is more loss than profit to them ;
 For what appears their bane as clear as day,
 Is ever sure to be the thing they do,—
 As sight of a descending shell, 'tis known,
 Will fix the man, who sees it, to the spot,
 Where he is sure to die, with limbs at large
 As his that walks or runs.

Muhl. I know you, sir !

The gracious man they took me first before,
 Who pitied me ; with patient audience heard me ;
 Enjoin'd them gently to entreat me, and,
 Far as their duty warranted, to make
 The pains of bondage light.

Gen. Kle. Have they obey'd me ?

Muhl. They have.

Gen. Kle. You want no comforts they can give you ?

Muhl. They have done all they could to comfort me,
 And Heaven has done the rest. I am to die
 On Saturday—I ask'd not at what hour ?
 Will't please you tell me, sir ?

Gen. Kle. Sir ?

Muhl. I perceive

It gives you pain to do't. Don't heed, for me—
 He feels not death that uses life to die !
 The hour, sir ?

Gen. Kle. Nine o'clock.

Muhl. What kind of death

Am I to suffer ?

Gen. Kle. Sir ?

Muhl. I merely ask,

Because there's something in the form of death
 To poor humanity, however brave
 To meet it. I would know it ere it comes,—
 Look at it—meet it with accustom'd eye,—
 Not to be startled by it at the time
 I should be all myself—not that I trust
 In my own strength—I have a firmer stay.
 What death am I to die ?—Is't by the sword ?

Gen. Kle. It is !

Muhl. I'm sorry, sir, to give you pain.

Gen. Kle. Sir, I can fight !—I love the fight. I think
 The blast of a trumpet music !—Beat a drum
 In concert with the shrill throat of fife,
 And my heart dances !—It is mirth to me
 To hear the running roar of musketry
 From wing to wing, along the blazing line !

And when the cannon thunders, clap on clap,
 So thick, there's not a breath of pause between,
 I tower as I myself could rule the bolts!
 I have seen death on every side of me,
 And given it not a thought! I have ta'en wounds,
 And never felt them, in the battle's heat!
 But I can't bear to look upon a man
 About to die, and in cold blood! I own
 I am a coward there! Forgive me, sir!
 Have you a friend, sir, whom you wish to see?

Muhl. Is there one near me? You're a merciful,
 Considerate man—you would not, idly, raise a hope—
 You would not raise but to kill it straight!
 Sir, I had learn'd to think a boundary,
 'Twixt me and all things living 'neath the sun,
 Was drawn, and no more to be cross'd by me
 Than the dark frontier of the grave, once pass'd!
 But you have breathed a word, and it is gone!
 I have a child, sir!—If she knows my plight,
 She's here in Prague!—she's at my prison-door!
 Is she?—Is it of her you speak?—That sob—
 In the next room! Is it my daughter's heart
 That's bursting there?—Is it?—My Meeta!—Come!—
 Thou know'st thy father!—Fear not for him—Come!
 He has strength enough to bear the sight of thee;
 But not to want it longer, when he thinks
 Thou'rt near him! Come to him! Come—Come! my child!

[MEETA enters, rushing into her father's arms; ADOLPHA
 and IDENSTEIN following.]

Meeta. You bear it, father!—See!—and so do I!
 O, I was right!—No door that man can shut,
 But Heaven can open! Day succeeded day!
 In vain chance, chance; and mock'd me still! Yet, spite
 of all,
 I cherish'd hope, nor suffer'd it to dwindle;
 And 'tis fulfill'd! I have pass'd your prison-door!
 I see you!—hear you!—I am in your arms!

[MUHL, DENAU and MEETA retire.]

Gen. Kle. What can Adolpha mean, and Idenstein?
 What can they be about? What do they mean
 By staying here? Why don't they call me hence?
 How cool they stand!—How very cool!—while I
 Am writhing!—Ay!—A pair of callous hearts!
 They would be thought to weep—and if they do,
 They like it! Cough, and seem to wipe your eyes!
 Do! Can't you go, if you can't bear it? Don't
 You know there is a door? and can't you go,
 And take me with you?—Idenstein!—Adolpha!

Adol. Sir!

Gen. Kle. Madam!

Iden. General!

Gen. Kle. Sir!—I hope you're pleased?

Adol. At what, dear sir?

Gen. Kle. To see two human hearts
Bleeding, that you stay here as you were wood,
Or lead, or stone, instead of flesh and blood!

Adol. We thought your duty, sir——

Gen. Kle. My duty!—Pshaw!

You know you never let me do my duty!

Adol. We will withdraw, if you will let us, father!

Gen. Kle. "Let us!"—You never do but what you're let!

[GENERAL KLEINER, IDENSTEIN, and ADOLPHA, move
softly towards the door.]

Muhl. Who is that?

Meeta. Which?

Muhl. She that's moving towards the door!

Meeta. The lady that obtain'd admittance for me.

Muhl. Bid her stop!

Meeta. My father?

Muhl. Lady, stop! The face,
Well as the form!—I saw thy mother's form,
And now I see her face! Do you not see
Your mother?

Meeta. Father, you forget—She died
When I was but an infant!

Muhl. True!—You're right!
I had forgot! Then see your mother now—
As she was at your age, Meeta!—Yes!—my child!

Meeta. Sir!—Father!—'tis the daughter of the Governor!

Iden. His mind is shaken by imprisonment!

Muhl. No, sir! my heart is struck!—struck by the form
And face of one that's dead—long dead—yet stands
Alive again before me!

Meeta. Dearest father,
It is the daughter of the Governor.
The Governor that's there!

Muhl. I beg her pardon,
I beg her pardon, Meeta, yet I feel,
As I were asking pardon of my child.
Sir, were those eyes your wife's?—Those perfect arches,
As though Art set a copy unto Nature,
To try her cunning!—and that domy forehead
Of feeling, speaking marble!—and the rest
O' the features, with the form therewith consorting!
Were they your wife's? If so, they once belong'd
To mine!—I cannot look on her and think
She's not my child.

[Turns up.]

Iden. Why are you lost, Adolpha?

Adol. I cannot help it! I am strangely moved.

[Aside.]

[Aside.]

Iden. At what, my love?

Adol. [aloud]. To hear a father's voice,
As never did it sound to me before!

Muhl. What saidst thou, Meeta?

Meeta. 'Twas the lady spoke.

Muhl. The voice too! It recalls to me my home,
As from my hearth it came—my very hearth!
But she's the daughter of the Governor!

[Retires to the back of the stage, and sits.]

Meeta. As drops *his* heart the hope, mine takes it up!

Gen. Kle. Idenstein—

Iden. Sir—

Gen. Kle. Let us go.

Iden. Adolpha!

Meeta. Stop!

No!—Not a trait! No more resembles him
Than I!—while as I look at her, methinks,
Touches, as of a face I can't recall,
Yet feel as once I knew, start forth from it!
You're troubled, sir—nor yet are *you* at ease, *[To IDENSTEIN.]*
So many tokens call him owner, yet
The precious thing that bears them not his own!
Incredible! impossible—my heart
Protests against it!—yearns for her! cries out
She's his and mine, and will not be gainsaid!
Are you the daughter of the Governor?

Adol. I am—I am his only child!—

Meeta. You are!

I kiss your hand and ask your pardon! but—
What scar is this upon your wrist?—No knife
Could make this wound, and in your father's house
How came you by it? Was it by a knife?

Adol. No, by a sword.

Meeta. When?

Adol. When I was an infant.

Meeta. Where?

Adol. At the siege of Magdeburg!

Meeta. The siege

Of Magdeburg! How came you there?

Adol. I know not.

Meeta. *[To GENERAL KLEINER.]* Sir, are you—

Are you her father?—Is he, her father? *[To IDENSTEIN.]*—

Both

Look doubt at one another! Providence!
What can this mean? Why are you silent, sir?
If she you call your daughter—Look at me!
Don't turn away!—If she you call your child
Was in the siege of Magdeburg, I lost
A sister there.—Is this she? O, a word
To save my heart from bursting! Her nurse, whose hand
I held by, carried her,—a soldier seized
The woman by the hair—

Gen. Kle. I smote him down,

And saved the child! *[MUHLIDENAU rushing forward, throws
himself at the Governor's feet, clasping his knees.]*

Meeta. 'Tis she! She's ours! She's found! My sister!

Muhl. Meeta!

Thy sister! What! in one another's arms!
Give her to me!

Meeta. Here, take her to thy heart!
Into it, father!—Sister!—Father!—Heaven!

[*MUHLDENAU and ADOLPHA embrace—MEETA rushes up to them, and kneeling, clasps them both.—Act ends.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Joseph's House.*

Enter MEETA and ADOLPHA.

Adol. What place is this, and wherefore am I here?

Meeta. Art thou afraid of me, my sister?

Adol. No.

Meeta. Then fear not where I bring thee, nor the cause.
O! my new other self, were it a time,
I'd give thee vouchers of heart-coin'd words
To prove thy safety—good of every kind—
Dear to me—worlds, ay, worlds beyond my own.
Dost trust in me?

Adol. I do.

Meeta. Wilt do my bidding—
Wilt do't to-night, however questionable
Inexplicable, strange?

Adol. Your words are darkness,
Which yet I trust myself to, with your looks
Of Truth and Love for guides. I'll do your will.

Meeta. My sister, my dear sister, let me think,
And lay your cheek the while a space to mine;
There, there, thou prompt'st me sweetly with the touch
Of thy sweet cheek. I have comfort for thee, sister—
Our father will not die.

Adol. How know you that?
The Governor has heard no tidings yet—
The distance greater, than his courier,
Despatch'd on the instant, with the prayer for mercy,
Could compass in a day!

Meeta. He will not die.

Adol. My sister!

Meeta. What!

Adol. Your words are oracles
I trust to, with a thousand human fears
To shake my heart.

Meeta. Our father will not die!
Now listen. There will be a storm to-night—
Fierce rain with deluge, high uprooting wind,
Thunder and thunderbolts. Look in mine eyes,

And let them serve thee for interpreters,
To make my dark words clear. 'Twill break around
Our father's prison. There its rage will play,
Nor, till it bursts an entrance to his dungeon,
To set him free, stop smiting! Canst thou read,
Without a glossary? This house will be
Beyond its range!

Adol. My husband, and my father!—
I cannot help it, he has been my father
In all things but my blood!

Meeta. There's nothing wrong.
'Tis very right. I'll call him father too;
So think him, feel him too, for thy dear sake.
And now thy promise, sister! Weigh my words.
Thy husband and the Governor might fall;
Here they are safe.—Don't interrupt me, sister,
Time's brief and swift, and action must be instant,
Or not at all.—Thou must indite a letter,
Urging their prompt attendance here—alone—
On matter of as pressing moment as
Question of life or death. I know the thought
Thou wouldst give utterance to—'Tis not an act
Of treachery, but duty! Thou didst promise
Obedience to me.

Adol. Hardly dost thou task me,
But I'll respect my word.

Meeta. Then prove it straight,
Sit down and write the letter. O, my sister,
Confide in me! Do it without stint!—with cheer!—
That's right—you will!—go on!

ADOLPHA writes—Enter JOSEPH.

Jos. The trusty friends
I told you of are come.

Meeta. I thank you. Armed?

Jos. A weapon each beneath his gaberdine.

Meeta. How many are they?

Jos. Twenty.

Meeta. That is right;
Their number makes resistance idle. Yet
As courage does not take account of odds,
And slightest scath, to them, were wound, to us;
'Twere well they should disarm your visitors
On the unprepared instant. Is it not strange
I grow more calm as the dread crisis comes
Of this momentous night? You are aware
Whate'er befalls, the motive of the act
Holds you absolved;—besides, it is not yours,
But mine!

Jos. I take it all on mine own head.

Meeta. There mustn't be a light when they come in,
Lest it betray thy friends! Go send me now

That servant of the Governor who came
Along with us. Is't written, sister?

Adol. Yes.

Meeta. Thank you, my sister; now direct it.

Enter Governor's Servant.

Sir, seek straight the Governor, and give him this.

[*Servant goes out.*]

Now, sister, come, and be thou strong of heart:

I'll give thee clearer reasons, on the way.

This night of death shall bring us days of life. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*Another Room in JOSEPH'S House.*

Enter HANS.

Hans. I wonder when the honeymoon begins!
I'm one day married, and no glimpse on't yet!
Or shall I ever have a honeymoon?
Or is there such a thing? Until I see it,
I'll not believe it. Twenty leagues of travel
Is not a honeymoon! Strange company,
That care no doit for me, nor I for them,
Are not a honeymoon! A dinner snapp'd,
Not eaten, can't be call'd a honeymoon!
'Tis Esther's fault! No sooner were we married,
Than off she sets for Prague—nor leaves me choice,
Except to stay behind, or come with her.
Of course I do the latter, as beseems
A married man. I know my duty, but
I see no honeymoon, or chance of it!
No merry-making!—not a soul I know
To give me joy! No presents, visitings,
Feastings, and dancing, as, I know, are wont
At other people's marriages, with scores
Of little tricks and rogueries they play.
I have not had a laugh—and here I'm left,
Five hours alone! Is this a honeymoon!
And if it is, I would I ne'er had been
A married man! I'm fit to hang myself!

Esther. [*Entering.*] Husband!

Hans. Well, wife?

Esther. You look not happy!

Hans. No.

Esther. And why, dear chuck?

Hans. Because I am not so.

Esther. Not happy!

Hans. No.

Esther. Why, am not I thy wife?

Do I not treat thee kindly, lovingly?

Do I not call thee hubby, spouse, and chuck,

And every other kind of tender names?
What want'st thou to content thee, dearest love?

Hans. I want a honeymoon.

Esther. A honeymoon?

Why this is it! 'Tis on, my honey-love,
And almost all to come.

Hans. 'Tis on? 'Tis not!

Be this the honeymoon, I'm sick of it!
I want no more of it! Will have no more.

Esther. O cruel—cruel Hans.

Hans. If I had thought
To pass such honeymoon as this, I ne'er
Had married.

Esther. Would you have me break my heart?

Hans. I have no comfort with thee!

Esther. Do I live
To hear thee say so!

Hans. No delight in thee!

Esther. No, Hans? You'll make me wish that I were dead!

Hans. I took thee for a helpmate—thou art none!
I scarce set eyes upon thee! Thou art out,
Five hours and more, and hast not told me where.

Esther. I went on business, Hans, that's not my own.

Hans. Thou hast no business with such business! Fit
I mope at home, and have a wife that ought
To keep me company! I'm fairly turn'd
From honey into gall! What business was it,
Took thee away?

Esther. I may not tell.

Hans. You must!

Esther. I won't!

Hans. I'll show her, I'll be master! Now,
Or never—I'm resolved! One whisper'd me,
As from the chaplain's we came out—"Beware!—
Look to your wife, sir!"—'twas the corporal who
Had, ne'er, beguiled me—"mind! or she'll put on
What is no proper part of woman's gear!"
So I'll begin in time! What bus'ness was it
Took thee away?

Esther [*gently*]. I will not tell thee, Hans!

Hans [*angrily*]. You won't?

Esther [*more angrily*]. I won't, Hans!—Mind what you're
about!

You know me!

Hans [*angrily*]. Yes!—but yet you know not me!—
I will not have it!—won't allow it!

Esther. What?

Hans. To have thee gadding in the honeymoon—
If honeymoon it be!

Esther. If honeymoon
It be?

Hans. I say it is no honeymoon!—

Where is the wine?—where are the cakes?—where are
The sports and games?—where are the friends and neighbours?
Why are we here, and not in Mariendorpt?
I thought we should go thither, when I made
A wife of thee!

Esther. You made a wife of me?

You say it, sir?—'Twas I made you a husband!

Hans. And if you did, I'll keep myself a husband—
I will be master!

Esther. Hear him!

Hans. Lord!

Esther. O dear!

Hans. And lord of that, I'll not be left alone,
Again!—I won't!—to fret myself from wine
To vinegar!

Esther. Look, sir!

Hans. Look, ma'am!

Esther. I tell you——

Hans. And I tell you!

Esther. I'll make you know yourself!

Hans. You will?—I'll run away to Mariendorpt!

Esther. [*Frightened.*] You won't, dear Hans?

Hans. I'll be divorced—I will!

Esther. You'll kill me, Hans!

Hans. I'll take another wife!

Esther. [*Crying.*] O dear! O dear!

Was it for this, I let you win my heart—
O'ercome my hatred of your tyrant sex—
And, from my state of happy singlehood,
Transform me to a miserable wife?—

O Esther! Esther!—woman never knows
When she's well off, until she is undone!

Hans. Don't cry! 'Twill spoil your eyes! My wrath is
soothed,

I'm your own Hans again—your loving Hans!
I'm pacified—I'm calm'd. The storm's blown o'er;
All's smooth and still, no ripple now, nor breath.

Esther. I'll tell thee all, Hans.

Hans. No, you shan't!—I say
I will not hear a word—a syllable,
As I'm your husband.—Let her have her way,
So that she keeps to wearing her own clothes!

Esther. I thank you, Hans. I see you love me still.

Hans. Love you?—Adore you!—Idolize you!—But
'Twill never do to want our honeymoon! [*They retire.*]

*Enter abruptly GENERAL KLEINER and IDENSTEIN, followed by
JOSEPH.*

Gen. Kle. What means this violence?—What men were
those
Disarm'd us in the hall? The lady where,
That sent for us?

Jos. No ill is meant you, sir,
But good. The men disarm'd you, are your guards,
Trusty for you, to death. The lady's gone.

Gen. Kle. 'Tis all thy wife's contriving, Idenstein.

Iden. You know the value of a thousand ducats?

Jos. I do.

Iden. I'll give you them to set us free:

Jos. Took I the sum, 'twould be to peril that
Were worth it to you, countless times—your lives!

Iden. Our lives!

Jos. They are in *my* care.

Gen. Kle. Look, honest friend;
Wilt thou consent to set us free at once,
There's not a unit in two thousand ducats,
But I will count thee down.

Iden. Thou art a Jew,
And wilt not list to reason?

Jos. Not such reason
As that. There's not in Prague that bulky sum
Could weigh—the matter of a line—the scale
Wherein my pledge to keep you here is put—
My love—my gratitude—my principle—
Which I respect, my lord, although a Jew!

Gen. Kle. Dost thou reflect that I'm the Governor?
That I can punish thee? That I can throw thee
Into a dungeon?—put thee to the rack?
Load thee with chains, consign thee to the galleys?—
Hang thee, good Jew?

Jos. I know it very well.
I know thou hast the power, although thou lack'st
The will, to execute a cruel deed;
And when befits the penalty to fall,
Usest the keen sword with a melting eye.
Every one knows the Governor of Prague!

Gen. Kle. Every one knows him for the fool he is!

Jos. Although I am a Jew, I honour you, sir.
The hospitality I force upon you—
Except compulsion—I have taken care
Should stand acquitted of all disrespect.
That room presents refreshment—that beyond
Repose. This night alone you are my guest,
And shall, to-morrow, fully learn the cause
Why you are here; and then be free to go.
So pray you find contentment, if you can,
Where profit cannot come of discontent.

[Goes out.]

As ESTHER and HANS are following, IDENSTEIN beckons the former.

Iden. Hark you, fair lady, you are beautiful.

Esther. I know I am.

Hans. She knows she is.

Iden. She is;
And beauty argues goodness—and if goodness
Be not made up, 'mongst other precious things,
Of generosity, 'tis negative,
And proves of no account!

Hans. What's *negative*?

Iden. A diamond necklace clasp'd around your neck,
A score of ducats for each several drop,
And each the twentieth fraction of the set,
Would not be out of place.—Is there a window
Whence one might drop himself into the street?

Hans. No, there is not! You put no necklace, sir,
About her neck! 'Tis mine, and not her own!
Go, Esther!

Esther. Sir, I am not to be bribed.

Hans. That's right—but go!

[ESTHER goes out.]

Iden. You are her husband, friend?

Hans. I am.

Iden. And well she chose you.

Hans. So she did.

Iden. Art thou in service?

Hans. Yes.

Iden. Wouldst thou not rather
Be thy own master?

Hans. Who would not?

Iden. Wouldst like
To be a hero?

Esther [without]. Hans!

Hans. I'm coming!—Yes,
Knew I a way, was safe.

[To IDENSTEIN.]

Iden. You have a scruple
To be a soldier?

Hans. A small scruple.

Esther [without]. Hans!

Hans. I'm coming.

Iden. Would you like to have a farm?
Have your own serving-men and serving-maids?
Keep your own swine and kine? Ride your own horse?—
You'd look a man on horseback!

Hans. So I would!

Iden. All these are thine, wilt go an errand first.

Hans. Where?

Esther [without]. Hans!

Hans. I'm coming, Esther.

Esther. Come along!

Hans. Where?

Esther. [Appearing at the door.] Hans!

Hans. I'm coming, Esther.

Esther. Come at once!

[Pulls him off.]

Iden. We are a pair of birds, sir, in a cage.

Gen. Kle. Birds?—We are fools! This comes of my good-
nature!

It still has been my ruin! I was made
 A dunce by my mother, for my fondness of her!
 What lack'd in spoiling me, aunts made up—
 I was so docile, biddable to them!
 My sisters brought me to destruction by
 Improving my good temper, which they made
 Their ready scape-goat in all kinds of scrapes;
 And which their gentle friends in dimity
 Employ'd, to get me into divers straits,
 From which to extricate myself were only
 Entanglement anew! My wife completed
 My ruin! My sweet disposition made her
 So fond of me, to please her I would feign
 Sickness, that she might play my nurse. One thing
 Alone was wanting to my quite undoing—
 A child, and that, as nature would not find me,
 I must provide myself with—thy Adolpha—
 Who, for her own ends, keeps us prisoners here!
 What's to be done?

Iden. To bear what must be borne.

They, that command us, are a host to one.

Gen. Kle. Let's in, then, and submit.

Iden. I follow, sir.

Gen. Kle. No fool, so trick'd as a good-natured man!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE THE LAST.—*A Dungeon.*

MUHLDENAU *asleep on a couch*—MEETA *sitting near, with*
 ADOLPHA *kneeling by her, sleeping with her head on MEETA'S*
lap.

Enter LIEUTENANT.

Meeta. Softly!—They sleep!—Your news is bad?

Lieut. It is. The answer is arrived. With fruitless search
 They have sought the Governor. Not finding him,
 On me, as second in command, devolved
 The painful task to break the packet open,
 Which gives no hope of life.

Meeta. It was expected:

We are prepared.—So, please you softly tread,
 As you depart again.—[*LIEUTENANT goes out.*—He has
 awaked her!—

Sleep, sister, sleep!

Adol. [*Starting.*] What time of night is it?

Meeta. It is no longer night, but morning, sister.

Adol. Morning?

Meeta. The chimes of a new day have struck
 Again and yet again!

Adol. How often, sister?

Meeta. Thrice.

Adol. It is very still.

Meeta. Too still, but we shall hear
The sound of stirring shortly.

Adol. You are sure?

Meeta. I am.

Adol. You comfort me!—you are so calm!

Meeta. Sister, we both had need be calm!—Look there!

Adol. How sound our father sleeps!—Knows he our hope?

Meeta. No!—it might draw his thoughts from better hope:
From hope that doth ever in possession end;
Hope that hath naught of earth in it, to crumble
I' the grasping. Sister, you don't know my father!—
On earth, he has lived in heaven;—Don't fear for him!
He is that happy man, who is prepared
To live or die!

Adol. He will not die!

Meeta. Speak softly!

He is awaked! It can't be help'd. Dear sister,
Let it not melt thee, should he talk of death.
For tears are catching things, and nature's nature,
Long as it breathes. Let's countenance the calm
Which his pure spirit keeps.

Muhl. Meeta.

Meeta. Here, father.

Muhl. What, both my children!—both!—Adolpha, too!
Is not this merciful, to have you here?
That my last earthward sigh I am permitted
To breathe upon your heads in blessing you?
What is the time, my Meeta?—How far on
Is my last day within this prison-house?
These walls of clay, in which the spirit's pent—
That's going back to him who lodged it here!
'Tis nothing else! How easy, then, to die,
To him who thinks it so! What is the time?

Meeta. Another day is onward.

Muhl. To that window
Comes the first beam that's herald of the sun—
See if there's sign of the fair messenger,
Or shall I do't, my child?

Meeta. No, father.

Muhl. Well,

How is it?—Is there mark on the horizon—
A blending as of light with darkness, or
Something that's plainer?—Tell me, child! Mine eye
Is fix'd on day, to which noonday is night!

Meeta. 'Tis early morning—a dun glow—almost
A streak.

Muhl. The boundary of yesterday
Is cross'd some hours. Come hither, both of you.

Hans. No—not I!
 I fired a shot once when I was a boy,
 And kill'd a sparrow—as I live I did!
 I to be startled by a shot! [*Shot again.*] Odds life!
 That's shameful waste of powder, and in time
 Of war too.

Rod. Here! put on this cap of mine,
 And show me how you look in it.

Hans. I please you?

Rod. Gods, sir, you make a show more warlike far
 Than would a whole platoon with shoulder'd arms
 And bayonets fix'd.

Hans. What were I did you add
 My body to my head!

Rod. To go by rule,
 You would be worth a regiment! How fine
 Your eye looks when it rolls! Here, take my sword
 And flourish it.

Hans. What think'st me match to now?

Rod. A whole brigade—Foot—Horse—Artillery,
 To sweep a field!

Hans. I'll be a soldier.

ESTHER—entering and aside.

Esther. Hans!

Rod. Then take the bounty.

Esther. Take it if he dares!

Hans. I never said I'd take it.

Rod. But you said
 You'd be a soldier.

Hans. Yes; with Esther's leave.

Esther. O! was it so?—What do you with that cap?
 Take't off, or I will put one on your head
 Will fit it better! Flourishing a sword!
 Have you a mind the boy should cut himself,
 You man of war?—Give back the sword and cap.
 Sir, you may sell your own limbs if you like,
 You know the worth of them; but for the lad's,
 They're not his own; and not for market, sir.

Rod. And is the bargain off?

Hans. And don't you hear
 What Esther says?—It were a valiant man
 Would gainsay her!—I would not for my head!

Rod. [*Looking alternately at ESTHER and HANS.*] I see!

Hans. We'll talk of it another time
 When she's not by.

Rod. [*To ESTHER.*] Well I'll let off the lad,
 So that I get a kiss?

Hans. [*Placing himself between them.*] You get not that!
 Nay, an I die for it, you get not that!
 Nay, an you come with swords and bayonets,
 Bullets and cannon-balls, you get not that!

Esther. Hans is a man!—Take my advice, and know [*To Rod.*
A lion without proving of his fangs.
Touch me! and better for you you had been
In prison-keeping than at large to-day.
Man never kiss'd me yet, sir.

Hans. Only Hans.

Esther. Nor e'er shall kiss me, sir!

Hans. Save I'm the man.

Esther. I like a smirking swaggering turkey-cock,
That eyes a woman, as he need but look
And swallow her!

Rod. I'll see your spark again.

Esther. See he don't prove a fire and scorch you, sir! [*Goes out.*
Hans, you have acted like a man to-day,
You're a good lad; but you were never made
Match for a world like this, to get through it,
By yourself.—A pity 'tis you have not aunt,
Sister, nor mother, that would look to you,
Nor honest woman that might serve for such,
And, maybe, love you better!

Hans. Esther!—Esther!

Esther. Why, bless me, Hans! you're always saying that,
'Tis very plain there's something you would have,
But what that something is, not quite so clear;
Speak out, Hans, and take heart—I cannot read
The stars, you know; I'm not a conjurer,
Or a diviner, or a doctor, who
Finds hidden ailments out. I'm nothing but
An honest simple woman, that would do
A kind turn for thee, knew she but the way;
So want'st thou anything, speak out, good Hans.

Hans. I want a wife.

Esther. You do not say so!

Hans. Yes,

I do.—Now, wanted you a husband, Esther,
How well we should be match'd!

Esther. I want a husband!—

But, then, you want a wife—that makes a change:
And though I do not want a husband, Hans,
Yet I might bring myself, you know, to take one,
To save the wits or life of a poor lad
Like you, that has no mother, sister, aunt,
To look to him! Know you where bides the chaplain
O' the regiment?

Hans. I do.

Esther. I'll talk with him.

Do you not lead the way?

What, are you not in haste to get a wife?
I thought you were.

Hans. I am; but am so pleased,
I know not what to do!—to go or stay,
To laugh or cry, to talk or hold my tongue.

Esther. Poor honest lad ! A pity 'twere the world
Should take thee in ! Thou ought'st to have a wife,
If but to look to thee ! 'Twould not be right
To leave thee without one, a day, an hour ;
And such a friend as I'm to thee, at hand.
Would it, Hans ? The poor lad ! he's quite confounded !
How interesting does he look !—Come, Hans !
You know the way to the chaplain's—I believe—
I think—I'm almost sure I'll take you, Hans !
[*They go out, ESTHER leaning upon him.*]

SCENE III.—*The Fortress of Prague—A Room.*

Gen. Kleiner [without]. Wait you without.

Adol. [without]. We will, sir.

Gen. Kle. [without]. Idenstein,
Keep guard upon her.

Iden. [without]. There's no need, sir.

Gen. Kle. No—

A wife most docile—let her have her way !

[*Enters with the* LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR.

Bring here the prisoner. Do not say 'tis I

That want to see him, nor apprise him how

I am accompanied—

[*LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR goes out.*

I had hoped this task

Would have been wholly spared me,—so relapse

Of consciousness succeeded to relapse,

When nature once gave way, till nearly half

The interval that spares him life was out.

But she recovers and at once demands

Fulfilment of my word.—What now my course ?

A veteran take the field without a plan—

Or take the field at all with mutiny

In the ranks ! How come I here ? What brought me here ?

A regiment of foot, or horse, or what ?

Can I believe I came of mine own will ?

With aid of mine own limbs, when I would be

A thousand miles away ? I must be mad,—

I, that can't bear to see a caged bird !

Mad for a hundred ducats ! I would give

That sum—ay, twice as much, to any one,

Would bind me hand and foot and take me hence !

[*Re-enter* LIEUTENANT, with MUHLDENAU.

Lieut. The prisoner.

Gen. Kle. Leave us, good Lieutenant. [*LIEUTENANT goes out.*] Sir—

Muhl. Your pleasure ?

Gen. Kle. Pleasure, sir ? I have no pleasure !
I'm an unhappy man, that with the power
To do his pleasure, cannot do it, sir.

I know the track I ought to take, and would,
 Yet always go the way that's contrary.
 Sir, were a fever next door to me, and
 I knew removing further would prevent me
 From taking it, I would remove next door !
 There is in some men a fatality
 That knowledge is more loss than profit to them ;
 For what appears their bane as clear as day,
 Is ever sure to be the thing they do,—
 As sight of a descending shell, 'tis known,
 Will fix the man, who sees it, to the spot,
 Where he is sure to die, with limbs at large
 As his that walks or runs.

Muhl. I know you, sir !

The gracious man they took me first before,
 Who pitied me ; with patient audience heard me ;
 Enjoin'd them gently to entreat me, and,
 Far as their duty warranted, to make
 The pains of bondage light.

Gen. Kle. Have they obey'd me ?

Muhl. They have.

Gen. Kle. You want no comforts they can give you ?

Muhl. They have done all they could to comfort me,
 And Heaven has done the rest. I am to die
 On Saturday—I ask'd not at what hour ?
 Will't please you tell me, sir ?

Gen. Kle. Sir ?

Muhl. I perceive

It gives you pain to do't. Don't heed, for me—
 He feels not death that uses life to die !

The hour, sir ?

Gen. Kle. Nine o'clock.

Muhl. What kind of death

Am I to suffer ?

Gen. Kle. Sir ?

Muhl. I merely ask,

Because there's something in the form of death
 To poor humanity, however brave
 To meet it. I would know it ere it comes,—
 Look at it—meet it with accustom'd eye,—
 Not to be startled by it at the time
 I should be all myself—not that I trust
 In my own strength—I have a firmer stay.
 What death am I to die ?—Is't by the sword ?

Gen. Kle. It is !

Muhl. I'm sorry, sir, to give you pain.

Gen. Kle. Sir, I can fight !—I love the fight. I think
 The blast of a trumpet music !—Beat a drum
 In concert with the shrill throat of fife,
 And my heart dances !—It is mirth to me
 To hear the running roar of musketry
 From wing to wing, along the blazing line !

And when the cannon thunders, clap on clap,
 So thick, there's not a breath of pause between,
 I tower as I myself could rule the bolts!
 I have seen death on every side of me,
 And given it not a thought! I have ta'en wounds,
 And never felt them, in the battle's heat!
 But I can't bear to look upon a man
 About to die, and in cold blood! I own
 I am a coward there! Forgive me, sir!
 Have you a friend, sir, whom you wish to see?

Muhl. Is there one near me? You're a merciful,
 Considerate man—you would not, idly, raise a hope—
 You would not raise but to kill it straight!
 Sir, I had learn'd to think a boundary,
 'Twixt me and all things living 'neath the sun,
 Was drawn, and no more to be cross'd by me
 Than the dark frontier of the grave, once pass'd!
 But you have breathed a word, and it is gone!
 I have a child, sir!—If she knows my plight,
 She's here in Prague!—she's at my prison-door!
 Is she?—Is it of her you speak?—That sob—
 In the next room! Is it my daughter's heart
 That's bursting there?—Is it?—My Meeta!—Come!—
 Thou know'st thy father!—Fear not for him—Come!
 He has strength enough to bear the sight of thee;
 But not to want it longer, when he thinks
 Thou'rt near him! Come to him! Come—Come! my child!

[*MEETA enters, rushing into her father's arms; ADOLPHA
 and IDENSTEIN following.*

Meeta. You bear it, father!—See!—and so do I!
 O, I was right!—No door that man can shut,
 But Heaven can open! Day succeeded day!
 In vain chance, chance; and mock'd me still! Yet, spite
 of all,
 I cherish'd hope, nor suffer'd it to dwindle;
 And 'tis fulfill'd! I have pass'd your prison-door!
 I see you!—hear you!—I am in your arms!

[*MUHLDENAU and MEETA retire.*

Gen. Kle. What can Adolpha mean, and Idenstein?
 What can they be about? What do they mean
 By staying here? Why don't they call me hence?
 How cool they stand!—How very cool!—while I
 Am writhing!—Ay!—A pair of callous hearts!
 They would be thought to weep—and if they do,
 They like it! Cough, and seem to wipe your eyes!
 Do! Can't you go, if you can't bear it? Don't
 You know there is a door? and can't you go,
 And take me with you?—Idenstein!—Adolpha!

Adol. Sir!

Gen. Kle. Madam!

Iden. General!

Gen. Kle. Sir!—I hope you're pleased?

Adol. At what, dear sir?

Gen. Kle. To see two human hearts
Bleeding, that you stay here as you were wood,
Or lead, or stone, instead of flesh and blood!

Adol. We thought your duty, sir——

Gen. Kle. My duty!—Pshaw!

You know you never let me do my duty!

Adol. We will withdraw, if you will let us, father!

Gen. Kle. "Let us!"—You never do but what you're let!

[GENERAL KLEINER, IDENSTEIN, and ADOLPHA, move
softly towards the door.]

Muhl. Who is that?

Meeta. Which?

Muhl. She that's moving towards the door!

Meeta. The lady that obtain'd admittance for me.

Muhl. Bid her stop!

Meeta. My father?

Muhl. Lady, stop! The face,
Well as the form!—I saw thy mother's form,
And now I see her face! Do you not see
Your mother?

Meeta. Father, you forget—She died
When I was but an infant!

Muhl. True!—You're right!
I had forgot! Then see your mother now—

As she was at your age, *Meeta*!—Yes!—my child!

Meeta. Sir!—Father!—'tis the daughter of the Governor!

Iden. His mind is shaken by imprisonment!

Muhl. No, sir! my heart is struck!—struck by the form
And face of one that's dead—long dead—yet stands
Alive again before me!

Meeta. Dearest father,
It is the daughter of the Governor.
The Governor that's there!

Muhl. I beg her pardon,
I beg her pardon, *Meeta*, yet I feel,
As I were asking pardon of my child.
Sir, were those eyes your wife's?—Those perfect arches,
As though Art set a copy unto Nature,
To try her cunning!—and that domy forehead
Of feeling, speaking marble!—and the rest
O' the features, with the form therewith consorting!
Were they your wife's? If so, they once belong'd
To mine!—I cannot look on her and think
She's not my child.

Iden. Why are you lost, *Adolpha*?

Adol. I cannot help it! I am strangely moved.

Iden. At what, my love?

Adol. [*aloud*]. To hear a father's voice,
As never did it sound to me before!

Muhl. What saidst thou, *Meeta*?

Meeta. 'Twas the lady spoke.

[*Turns up.*

[*Aside.*

[*Aside.*

Muhl. The voice too! It recalls to me my home,
As from my hearth it came—my very hearth!
But she's the daughter of the Governor!

[Retires to the back of the stage, and sits.]

Meeta. As drops *his* heart the hope, mine takes it up!

Gen. Kle. Idenstein—

Iden. Sir—

Gen. Kle. Let us go.

Iden. Adolpha!

Meeta. Stop!

No!—Not a trait! No more resembles him
Than I!—while as I look at her, methinks,
Touches, as of a face I can't recall,
Yet feel as once I knew, start forth from it!
You're troubled, sir—nor yet are *you* at ease, *[To IDENSTEIN.]*
So many tokens call him owner, yet
The precious thing that bears them not his own!
Incredible! impossible—my heart
Protests against it!—yearns for her! cries out
She's his and mine, and will not be gainsaid!
Are you the daughter of the Governor?

Adol. I am—I am his only child!—

Meeta. You are!

I kiss your hand and ask your pardon! but—
What scar is this upon your wrist?—No knife
Could make this wound, and in your father's house
How came you by it? Was it by a knife?

Adol. No, by a sword.

Meeta. When?

Adol. When I was an infant.

Meeta. Where?

Adol. At the siege of Magdeburg!

Meeta. The siege

Of Magdeburg! How came you there?

Adol. I know not.

Meeta. *[To GENERAL KLEINER.]* Sir, are you—

Are you her father?—Is he, her father? *[To IDENSTEIN.]*—

Both

Look doubt at one another! Providence!
What can this mean? Why are you silent, sir?
If she you call your daughter—Look at me!
Don't turn away!—If she you call your child
Was in the siege of Magdeburg, I lost
A sister there.—Is this she? O, a word
To save my heart from bursting! Her nurse, whose hand
I held by, carried her,—a soldier seized
The woman by the hair—

Gen. Kle. I smote him down,

And saved the child! *[MUHLIDENAU rushing forward, throws
himself at the Governor's feet, clasping his knees.]*

Meeta. 'Tis she! She's ours! She's found! My sister!

Muhl. Meeta!

Thy sister! What! in one another's arms!
Give her to me!

Meeta. Here, take her to thy heart!

Into it, father!—Sister!—Father!—Heaven!

[*MUHLDENAU and ADOLPHA embrace—MEETA rushes up to them, and kneeling, clasps them both.—Act ends.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Joseph's House.*

Enter MEETA and ADOLPHA.

Adol. What place is this, and wherefore am I here?

Meeta. Art thou afraid of me, my sister?

Adol. No.

Meeta. Then fear not where I bring thee, nor the cause.
O! my new other self, were it a time,
I'd give thee vouchers of heart-coin'd words
To prove thy safety—good of every kind—
Dear to me—worlds, ay, worlds beyond my own.
Dost trust in me?

Adol. I do.

Meeta. Wilt do my bidding—
Wilt do't to-night, however questionable
Inexplicable, strange?

Adol. Your words are darkness,
Which yet I trust myself to, with your looks
Of Truth and Love for guides. I'll do your will.

Meeta. My sister, my dear sister, let me think,
And lay your cheek the while a space to mine;
There, there, thou prompt'st me sweetly with the touch
Of thy sweet cheek. I have comfort for thee, sister—
Our father will not die.

Adol. How know you that?
The Governor has heard no tidings yet—
The distance greater, than his courier,
Despatch'd on the instant, with the prayer for mercy,
Could compass in a day!

Meeta. He will not die.

Adol. My sister!

Meeta. What!

Adol. Your words are oracles
I trust to, with a thousand human fears
To shake my heart.

Meeta. Our father will not die!
Now listen. There will be a storm to-night—
Fierce rain with deluge, high uprooting wind,
Thunder and thunderbolts. Look in mine eyes,

And let them serve thee for interpreters,
To make my dark words clear. 'Twill break around
Our father's prison. There its rage will play,
Nor, till it bursts an entrance to his dungeon,
To set him free, stop smiting! Canst thou read,
Without a glossary? This house will be
Beyond its range!

Adol. My husband, and my father!—
I cannot help it, he has been my father
In all things but my blood!

Meeta. There's nothing wrong.
'Tis very right. I'll call him father too;
So think him, feel him too, for thy dear sake.
And now thy promise, sister! Weigh my words.
Thy husband and the Governor might fall;
Here they are safe.—Don't interrupt me, sister,
Time's brief and swift, and action must be instant,
Or not at all.—Thou must indite a letter,
Urging their prompt attendance here—alone—
On matter of as pressing moment as
Question of life or death. I know the thought
Thou wouldst give utterance to—'Tis not an act
Of treachery, but duty! Thou didst promise
Obedience to me.

Adol. Hardly dost thou task me,
But I'll respect my word.

Meeta. Then prove it straight,
Sit down and write the letter. O, my sister,
Confide in me! Do it without stint!—with cheer!—
That's right—you will!—go on!

ADOLPHA writes—Enter JOSEPH.

Jos. The trusty friends
I told you of are come.

Meeta. I thank you. Armed?

Jos. A weapon each beneath his gaberdine.

Meeta. How many are they?

Jos. Twenty.

Meeta. That is right;
Their number makes resistance idle. Yet
As courage does not take account of odds,
And slightest scath, to them, were wound, to us;
'Twere well they should disarm your visitors
On the unprepared instant. Is it not strange
I grow more calm as the dread crisis comes
Of this momentous night? You are aware
Whate'er befalls, the motive of the act
Holds you absolved;—besides, it is not yours,
But mine!

Jos. I take it all on mine own head.

Meeta. There mustn't be a light when they come in,
Lest it betray thy friends! Go send me now

That servant of the Governor who came
Along with us. Is't written, sister?

Adol. Yes.

Meeta. Thank you, my sister; now direct it.

Enter Governor's Servant.

Sir, seek straight the Governor, and give him this.

[*Servant goes out.*]

Now, sister, come, and be thou strong of heart:

I'll give thee clearer reasons, on the way.

This night of death shall bring us days of life. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*Another Room in JOSEPH'S House.*

Enter HANS.

Hans. I wonder when the honeymoon begins!
I'm one day married, and no glimpse on't yet!
Or shall I ever have a honeymoon?
Or is there such a thing? Until I see it,
I'll not believe it. Twenty leagues of travel
Is not a honeymoon! Strange company,
That care no doit for me, nor I for them,
Are not a honeymoon! A dinner snapp'd,
Not eaten, can't be call'd a honeymoon!
'Tis Esther's fault! No sooner were we married,
Than off she sets for Prague—nor leaves me choice,
Except to stay behind, or come with her.
Of course I do the latter, as beseems
A married man. I know my duty, but
I see no honeymoon, or chance of it!
No merry-making!—not a soul I know
To give me joy! No presents, visitings,
Feastings, and dancing, as, I know, are wont
At other people's marriages, with scores
Of little tricks and rogueries they play.
I have not had a laugh—and here I'm left,
Five hours alone! Is this a honeymoon!
And if it is, I would I ne'er had been
A married man! I'm fit to hang myself!

Esther. [*Entering.*] Husband!

Hans. Well, wife?

Esther. You look not happy!

Hans. No.

Esther. And why, dear chuck?

Hans. Because I am not so.

Esther. Not happy!

Hans. No.

Esther. Why, am not I thy wife?

Do I not treat thee kindly, lovingly?

Do I not call thee hubby, spouse, and chuck,

And every other kind of tender names?
What want'st thou to content thee, dearest love?

Hans. I want a honeymoon.

Esther. A honeymoon?

Why this is it! 'Tis on, my honey-love,
And almost all to come.

Hans. 'Tis on? 'Tis not!

Be this the honeymoon, I'm sick of it!
I want no more of it! Will have no more.

Esther. O cruel—cruel Hans.

Hans. If I had thought
To pass such honeymoon as this, I ne'er
Had married.

Esther. Would you have me break my heart?

Hans. I have no comfort with thee!

Esther. Do I live
To hear thee say so!

Hans. No delight in thee!

Esther. No, Hans? You'll make me wish that I were dead!

Hans. I took thee for a helpmate—thou art none!
I scarce set eyes upon thee! Thou art out,
Five hours and more, and hast not told me where.

Esther. I went on business, Hans, that's not my own.

Hans. Thou hast no business with such business! Fit
I mope at home, and have a wife that ought
To keep me company! I'm fairly turn'd
From honey into gall! What business was it,
Took thee away?

Esther. I may not tell.

Hans. You must!

Esther. I won't!

Hans. I'll show her, I'll be master! Now,
Or never—I'm resolved! One whisper'd me,
As from the chaplain's we came out—"Beware!—
Look to your wife, sir!"—'twas the corporal who
Had, ne'er, beguiled me—"mind! or she'll put on
What is no proper part of woman's gear!"
So I'll begin in time! What bus'ness was it
Took thee away?

Esther [*gently*]. I will not tell thee, Hans!

Hans [*angrily*]. You won't?

Esther [*more angrily*]. I won't, Hans!—Mind what you're
about!

You know me!

Hans [*angrily*]. Yes!—but yet you know not me!—
I will not have it!—won't allow it!

Esther. What?

Hans. To have thee gadding in the honeymoon—
If honeymoon it be!

Esther. If honeymoon
It be?

Hans. I say it is no honeymoon!—

Where is the wine?—where are the cakes?—where are
The sports and games?—where are the friends and neighbours?
Why are we here, and not in Mariendorpt?
I thought we should go thither, when I made
A wife of thee!

Esther. You made a wife of me?

You say it, sir?—'Twas I made you a husband!

Hans. And if you did, I'll keep myself a husband—
I will be master!

Esther. Hear him!

Hans. Lord!

Esther. O dear!

Hans. And lord of that, I'll not be left alone,
Again!—I won't!—to fret myself from wine
To vinegar!

Esther. Look, sir!

Hans. Look, ma'am!

Esther. I tell you—

Hans. And I tell you!

Esther. I'll make you know yourself!

Hans. You will?—I'll run away to Mariendorpt!

Esther. [*Frightened.*] You won't, dear Hans?

Hans. I'll be divorced—I will!

Esther. You'll kill me, Hans!

Hans. I'll take another wife!

Esther. [*Crying.*] O dear! O dear!

Was it for this, I let you win my heart—
O'ercome my hatred of your tyrant sex—
And, from my state of happy singlehood,
Transform me to a miserable wife?—

O Esther! Esther!—woman never knows
When she's well off, until she is undone!

Hans. Don't cry! 'Twill spoil your eyes! My wrath is
soothed,

I'm your own Hans again—your loving Hans!
I'm pacified—I'm calm'd. The storm's blown o'er;
All's smooth and still, no ripple now, nor breath.

Esther. I'll tell thee all, Hans.

Hans. No, you shan't!—I say
I will not hear a word—a syllable,
As I'm your husband.—Let her have her way,
So that she keeps to wearing her own clothes!

Esther. I thank you, Hans. I see you love me still.

Hans. Love you?—Adore you!—Idolize you!—But
'Twill never do to want our honeymoon! [*They retire.*]

Enter abruptly GENERAL KLEINER *and* IDENSTEIN, *followed by*
JOSEPH.

Gen. Kle. What means this violence?—What men were
those
Disarm'd us in the hall? The lady where,
That sent for us?

And every other kind of tender names?
What want'st thou to content thee, dearest love?

Hans. I want a honeymoon.

Esther. A honeymoon?

Why this is it! 'Tis on, my honey-love,
And almost all to come.

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I want no more of it! Will have no more.

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I mope at home, and have a wife that ought
To keep me company! I'm fairly turn'd
From honey into gall! What business was it,
Took thee away?

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Or never—I'm resolved! One whisper'd me,
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Look to your wife, sir!"—'twas the corporal who
Had, ne'er, beguiled me—"mind! or she'll put on
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Hans [*angrily*]. Yes!—but yet you know not me!—
I will not have it!—won't allow it!

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The sports and games?—where are the friends and neighbours?
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I thought we should go thither, when I made
A wife of thee!

Esther. You made a wife of me?

You say it, sir?—'Twas I made you a husband!

Hans. And if you did, I'll keep myself a husband—
I will be master!

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Hans. Lord!

Esther. O dear!

Hans. And lord of that, I'll not be left alone,
Again!—I won't!—to fret myself from wine
To vinegar!

Esther. Look, sir!

Hans. Look, ma'am!

Esther. I tell you—

Hans. And I tell you!

Esther. I'll make you know yourself!

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O'ercome my hatred of your tyrant sex—
And, from my state of happy singlehood,
Transform me to a miserable wife?—

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As I'm your husband.—Let her have her way,
So that she keeps to wearing her own clothes!

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'Twill never do to want our honeymoon! [*They retire.*]

Enter abruptly GENERAL KLEINER *and* IDENSTEIN, *followed by*
JOSEPH.

Gen. Kle. What means this violence?—What men were
those
Disarm'd us in the hall? The lady where,
That sent for us?

Jos. No ill is meant you, sir,
But good. The men disarm'd you, are your guards,
Trusty for you, to death. The lady's gone.

Gen. Kle. 'Tis all thy wife's contriving, Idenstein.

Iden. You know the value of a thousand ducats?

Jos. I do.

Iden. I'll give you them to set us free.

Jos. Took I the sum, 'twould be to peril that
Were worth it to you, countless times—your lives!

Iden. Our lives!

Jos. They are in *my* care.

Gen. Kle. Look, honest friend;
Wilt thou consent to set us free at once,
There's not a unit in two thousand ducats,
But I will count thee down.

Iden. Thou art a Jew,
And wilt not list to reason?

Jos. Not such reason
As that. There's not in Prague that bulky sum
Could weigh—the matter of a line—the scale
Wherein my pledge to keep you here is put—
My love—my gratitude—my principle—
Which I respect, my lord, although a Jew!

Gen. Kle. Dost thou reflect that I'm the Governor?
That I can punish thee? That I can throw thee
Into a dungeon?—put thee to the rack?
Load thee with chains, consign thee to the galleys?—
Hang thee, good Jew?

Jos. I know it very well.
I know thou hast the power, although thou lack'st
The will, to execute a cruel deed;
And when befits the penalty to fall,
Usest the keen sword with a melting eye.
Every one knows the Governor of Prague!

Gen. Kle. Every one knows him for the fool he is!

Jos. Although I am a Jew, I honour you, sir.
The hospitality I force upon you—
Except compulsion—I have taken care
Should stand acquitted of all disrespect.
That room presents refreshment—that beyond
Repose. This night alone you are my guest,
And shall, to-morrow, fully learn the cause
Why you are here; and then be free to go.
So pray you find contentment, if you can,
Where profit cannot come of discontent.

[Goes out.]

As ESTHER and HANS are following, IDENSTEIN beckons the former.

Iden. Hark you, fair lady, you are beautiful.

Esther. I know I am.

Hans. She knows she is.

Iden. She is;
And beauty argues goodness—and if goodness
Be not made up, 'mongst other precious things,
Of generosity, 'tis negative,
And proves of no account!

Hans. What's *negative*?

Iden. A diamond necklace clasp'd around your neck,
A score of ducats for each several drop,
And each the twentieth fraction of the set,
Would not be out of place.—Is there a window
Whence one might drop himself into the street?

Hans. No, there is not! You put no necklace, sir,
About her neck! 'Tis mine, and not her own!
Go, Esther!

Esther. Sir, I am not to be bribed.

Hans. That's right—but go!

[*ESTHER goes out.*]

Iden. You are her husband, friend?

Hans. I am.

Iden. And well she chose you.

Hans. So she did.

Iden. Art thou in service?

Hans. Yes.

Iden. Wouldst thou not rather
Be thy own master?

Hans. Who would not?

Iden. Wouldst like
To be a hero?

Esther [*without*]. *Hans!*

Hans. I'm coming!—Yes,
Knew I a way, was safe.

[*To IDENSTEIN.*]

Iden. You have a scruple
To be a soldier?

Hans. A small scruple.

Esther [*without*]. *Hans!*

Hans. I'm coming.

Iden. Would you like to have a farm?
Have your own serving-men and serving-maids?
Keep your own swine and kine? Ride your own horse?—
You'd look a man on horseback!

Hans. So I would!

Iden. All these are thine, wilt go an errand first.

Hans. Where?

Esther [*without*]. *Hans!*

Hans. I'm coming, *Esther.*

Esther. Come along!

Hans. Where?

Esther. [*Appearing at the door.*] *Hans!*

Hans. I'm coming, *Esther.*

Esther. Come at once!

[*Pulls him off.*]

Iden. We are a pair of birds, sir, in a cage.

Gen. Kle. Birds?—We are fools! This comes of my good-
nature!

It still has been my ruin! I was made
 A dunce by my mother, for my fondness of her!
 What lack'd in spoiling me, aunts made up—
 I was so docile, biddable to them!
 My sisters brought me to destruction by
 Improving my good temper, which they made
 Their ready scape-goat in all kinds of scrapes;
 And which their gentle friends in dimity
 Employ'd, to get me into divers straits,
 From which to extricate myself were only
 Entanglement anew! My wife completed
 My ruin! My sweet disposition made her
 So fond of me, to please her I would feign
 Sickness, that she might play my nurse. One thing
 Alone was wanting to my quite undoing—
 A child, and that, as nature would not find me,
 I must provide myself with—thy Adolpha—
 Who, for her own ends, keeps us prisoners here!
 What's to be done?

Iden. To bear what must be borne.

They, that command us, are a host to one.

Gen. Kle. Let's in, then, and submit.

Iden. I follow, sir.

Gen. Kle. No fool, so trick'd as a good-natured man!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE THE LAST.—*A Dungeon.*

MUHLDENAU *asleep on a couch*—MEETA *sitting near, with*
 ADOLPHA *kneeling by her, sleeping with her head on MEETA'S*
lap.

Enter LIEUTENANT.

Meeta. Softly!—They sleep!—Your news is bad?

Lieut. It is. The answer is arrived. With fruitless search
 They have sought the Governor. Not finding him,
 On me, as second in command, devolved
 The painful task to break the packet open,
 Which gives no hope of life.

Meeta. It was expected:

We are prepared.—So, please you softly tread,
 As you depart again.—[*LIEUTENANT goes out.*—He has
 awaked her!—

Sleep, sister, sleep!

Adol. [*Starting.*] What time of night is it?

Meeta. It is no longer night, but morning, sister.

Adol. Morning?

Meeta. The chimes of a new day have struck
 Again and yet again!

Adol. How often, sister?

Meeta. Thrice.

Adol. It is very still.

Meeta. Too still, but we shall hear
The sound of stirring shortly.

Adol. You are sure?

Meeta. I am.

Adol. You comfort me!—you are so calm!

Meeta. Sister, we both had need be calm!—Look there!

Adol. How sound our father sleeps!—Knows he our hope?

Meeta. No!—it might draw his thoughts from better hope:
From hope that doth ever in possession end;
Hope that hath naught of earth in it, to crumble
I' the grasping. Sister, you don't know my father!—
On earth, he has lived in heaven;—Don't fear for him!
He is that happy man, who is prepared
To live or die!

Adol. He will not die!

Meeta. Speak softly!

He is awaked! It can't be help'd. Dear sister,
Let it not melt thee, should he talk of death.
For tears are catching things, and nature's nature,
Long as it breathes. Let's countenance the calm
Which his pure spirit keeps.

Muhl. Meeta.

Meeta. Here, father.

Muhl. What, both my children!—both!—Adolpha, too!
Is not this merciful, to have you here?
That my last earthward sigh I am permitted
To breathe upon your heads in blessing you?
What is the time, my Meeta?—How far on
Is my last day within this prison-house?
These walls of clay, in which the spirit's pent—
That's going back to him who lodged it here!
'Tis nothing else! How easy, then, to die,
To him who thinks it so! What is the time?

Meeta. Another day is onward.

Muhl. To that window

Comes the first beam that's herald of the sun—
See if there's sign of the fair messenger,
Or shall I do't, my child?

Meeta. No, father.

Muhl. Well,

How is it?—Is there mark on the horizon—
A blending as of light with darkness, or
Something that's plainer?—Tell me, child! Mine eye
Is fix'd on day, to which noonday is night!

Meeta. 'Tis early morning—a dun glow—almost
A streak.

Muhl. The boundary of yesterday
Is cross'd some hours. Come hither, both of you.

Kneel down ! The longest time that man may live,
 The lapse of generations of his race,
 The continent entire of time itself,
 Bears not proportion to eternity,
 Huge as the fraction of a grain of dew
 Co-measured with the broad unbounded ocean !
 There is the time of man—his proper time :
 Looking at which, this life is but a gust,
 A puff of breath, that's scarcely felt ere gone !
 Then comes a calm that lasts. My youngest one,
 Least known, but not less loved—My Meeta—

Meeta. Father,
 Am not I part of both ?

Muhl. My noble child !
 My Christian-trained child ! I did thee wrong
 To fear exception thou mightest take at that
 Which made my children equal. My found one !
 My blessings on thee full as upon her,
 That never left my side. Join hands with her !
 Love her for ever ! as thyself. Two hearts
 That join in truth, become a wall of rock,
 'Gainst which the surges of the world may lash,
 But only break themselves.

Adol. I hear a noise !
 'Tis—

Meeta. Sister, peace. What heeds a noise ?

Muhl. I think
 I heard it too—and understand it ; but
 Whate'er it is, it matters not to me.
 I see—the light comes on. Meeta, my child,
 Thy father gives thee thanks for hours and hours
 Of happiness. You have let fall her hand—
 Take it again—never let go the love
 That now unites thy sister's hand to thine !
 And take thy father's blessing, free and full,
 Which Heaven attests that thou hast merited,
 Who never wast but dutiful to me ! *[Noises nearer.]*

Adol. Hear you the sounds again, and louder ?

Meeta. Peace !

Dear sister, if it is to come, it will. *[Noises again, and nearer yet.]*

Muhl. What, Meeta ? These are not accustom'd sounds.
 There is a shining something in thine eye,
 That looks like hope—and thine, my other child !
 My children ! is there hope ? I'm human still !
 I'll live for you, my children.—*[Noises again.]* Those are
 shouts.

They move not with such sounds who come to see
 The spectacle of an untimely death—
 For human nature, howsoever wild,
 Is human still. *[Noise very loud, as of a general attack.]*

Meeta. Yes, father, there is hope !

Enter LIEUTENANT.

What come you for?

Lieut. The prisoner

Meeta. For what?

Lieut. To place him in securer keeping.

Meeta. Hence!

He's in his children's arms—or leave him here,
Or take us altogether.

[Shouts, and reports of musketry and cannon.]

Soldier enters.

Soldier. You are call'd for *[To* LIEUTENANT.
To look to our defence! They come upon us
A thousand men to one—the castle's lost!

Adol. He's saved—

Meeta. Not yet!

[Noise as of something giving way and falling.]

Adol. Hear you—They burst the gates!

Meeta. It may be something else.

Muhl. Ah, now to die—

[Noise as of people ascending.]

Were pain!

Adol. The rush of steps!

Rup. *[without]*. Burst in the door.

Meeta. 'Tis Rupert's voice—My father's saved—He lives!

Rup. *[Bursting in with others.]* My Meeta! honour'd
father!—we have come

With life and liberty!

Meeta. We thank you, Rupert!

Rupert, I knew you would not let him die!

How far is Prague your own?

Rup. This quarter, Meeta,

Which yet commands the rest! This post was long

Our general's aim! yet he so doubtful kept

His eagle hovering, the mighty pounce

Your strait accelerated, none could guess,

Until his fated quarry felt its power!

Meeta. Send trusty friends, and strong, along with me;
Speak not, but let thy answer be the act.

Rup. Dismiss your care! It is not needed, Meeta.
The faithful Hebrew met me in advancing,
And took in charge a chosen band to watch
Success, and bring thy friends to thee.—By this
I doubt not they are here—

Enter JOSEPH, conducting GENERAL KLEINER and IDENSTEIN.

The Governor?

Gen. Kle. Yes, sir,—but not your prisoners—that honour
These ladies claim.

Adol. Forgive us, father!

Gen. Kle. What!

Now thou hast found thy father?

Adol. Father still!

Muhl. Give me the Hebrew's hand—the Christian's friend—
His elder brother, though with difference.

Jos. All men should thus be brothers.

Hans. We shall have
Our honeymoon at last.

Esther. Be silent, Hans.

Meeta. Let all be silent, save the grateful hearts,
That speak in humble confidence to you. [To the audience.

END OF THE MAID OF MARIENDORPT.



LOVE:
A Play,
IN FIVE ACTS.

TO JAMES MUSPRATT, ESQ.,
OF LIVERPOOL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

A few honest words may convey a great deal,
This PLAY is justly and joyfully dedicated to you.

With affection and gratitude,

Yours,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

November, 1839.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1839.)

<i>Duke</i>	Mr. COOPER.
<i>Prince Frederick</i>	Mr. SELBY.
<i>Ulrick</i>	Mr. DILLEAR.
<i>Sir Rupert</i>	Mr. J. VINING.
<i>Sir Otto</i>	Mr. FITZJAMES.
<i>Sir Conrad</i>	Mr. WIGAN.
<i>Huon</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Nicholas</i>	Mr. AYLIFFE.
<i>Stephen</i>	Mr. W. H. PAYNE.
<i>Falconer</i>	Mr. COLLETT.
<i>Herald</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Empress</i>	Mrs. BROUGHAM.
<i>Countess</i>	Miss E. TREE.
<i>Catherine</i>	Madame VESTRIS.
<i>Christina</i>	Miss LEE.

LOVE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in CATHERINE'S House.*

Enter CHRISTINA and NICHOLAS.

Chris. As thou lov'st thine ease, Nicholas, restrain curiosity. It is a steed that runs away with a man, without his knowing it, until it has thrown him. The danger is never found out until the mischief is done. Besides, it is a woman's palfrey, which it befits not a man to ride. What signifies it to thee, who comes into the house, whatsoever be the hour, so it is I that let him in?

Nic. Doubtless, Mistress Christina; yet a knock at the door at two o'clock in the morning—and the door opening at that hour, to let a man into the house—and that man a gay young spark—may make a body wonder, though he have no more than the ordinary stock of curiosity.

Chris. Propriety, Nicholas, belongs to no one hour out of the twenty-four, more than to any other hour. It was fit that the young spark should come into the house, or I should not have let him in. And now mark what I say to you. Play not the house-dog any more. Do you mind? Let not your watchfulness interfere with your sleep; else, besides your sleep, it may peril your bed and board; but, if thou hearest a knock when thou liest on the weary side of thee, and wakest, draw thy nightcap over thine ears, and turn on the other side; and, so, to sleep again—yea, though it be four o'clock in the morning, good Nicholas!

Nic. I shall mind.

Chris. Do so, and be wise. Duty, that becomes a busy-body, ever turns itself at last out of doors. Hast thou a good place, friend Nicholas?

Nic. Not a better in all Germany!

Chris. Then take my advice, and keep it.

Nic. I will.

Chris. Do! [*NICHOLAS goes out.*] My mistress will be discovered at last, well as she disguises herself, and plays the man. I wish she had not taken this fancy into her head; it may bring her into trouble. Ha! here she is; returned to her proper self. Who would believe that this was the spark I let into the house at two o'clock in the morning!

Enter CATHERINE.

Cath. [*Speaking as she enters.*] Christina!

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1839.)

<i>Duke</i>	Mr. COOPER.
<i>Prince Frederick</i>	Mr. SELBY.
<i>Ulrick</i>	Mr. DILLEEAR.
<i>Sir Rupert</i>	Mr. J. VINING.
<i>Sir Otto</i>	Mr. FITZJAMES.
<i>Sir Conrad</i>	Mr. WIGAN.
<i>Huon</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Nicholas</i>	Mr. AYLIFFE.
<i>Stephen</i>	Mr. W. H. PAYNE.
<i>Falconer</i>	Mr. COLLETT.
<i>Herald</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Empress</i>	Mrs. BROUGHAM.
<i>Countess</i>	Miss E. TREE.
<i>Catherine</i>	Madame VESTRIS.
<i>Christina</i>	Miss LEE.

LOVE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in CATHERINE'S House.*

Enter CHRISTINA and NICHOLAS.

Chris. As thou lov'st thine ease, Nicholas, restrain curiosity. It is a steed that runs away with a man, without his knowing it, until it has thrown him. The danger is never found out until the mischief is done. Besides, it is a woman's palfrey, which it befits not a man to ride. What signifies it to thee, who comes into the house, whatsoever be the hour, so it is I that let him in?

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Enter CATHERINE.

Cath. [*Speaking as she enters.*] Christina!

Chris. Madam!

Cath. O, here you are! Was not Nicholas with you just now?

Chris. Yes; he is only this moment gone. I have just been giving him a lesson. He saw you when you came home last night.

Cath. Hush! Secrets should be dumb to very walls!

A chink may change a nation's destinies,
And where are walls without one—that have doors?
Voice hath a giant's might, not a dwarf's bulk;
It passeth where a tiny fly must stop;
Conspiracy, that does not lock it out,
Fastens the door in vain. Let's talk in whispers,
And then with mouth to ear. 'Tis strange, Christina,
So long I practise this deceit, and still
Pass for the thing I am not—ne'er suspected
The thing I am—'mongst those who know me best, too.
Yet would that all dissemblers meant as fair!
I play the cheat for very honesty,
To find a worthy heart out and reward it.
Far as the poles asunder are two things,
Self-interest and undesigning love;
Yet no two things more like, to see them smile.
He is a conjurer, Christina, then,
Can tell you which is which! Shall I be won
Because I'm valued as a money-bag,
For that I bring to him who winneth me?
No!—Sooner matins, in a cloister, than
Marriage, like that, in open church! 'Tis hard
To find men out! They are such simple things!
Heaven help you! they are mostly bird-catchers,
That hold aloof until you're in their nets,
And then they are down upon you and you're caged,
Nor more your wings your own. I have scarcely slept!

Chris. You run great risk, methinks, for doubtful gain.
I wonder oft, when thus you play the man,
You should escape offence; for men there are,
By nature brawlers, and of stalwart limb,
Who of their fellows take advantage, when
Of slight and stinted frame; and, at the best,
You make, in sooth, but a green and osier man!

Cath. And there's a little airy, fairy thing,
Call'd spirit, which makes equal statures, thews,
Ay, between dwarfs and giants, my Christina;
Whereof, although a woman, I have a share
Which ekes out my dimensions, and defies
Those to o'erbear me that o'ertower me.
Besides, I have full pockets! That's enough!
They call me "The young stranger," and forbear
All question, since I warn'd them 'twas my mood
To see the world *incomito*; which I vouch'd
With a free purse, that made the table ring

As I cast it down ; and startled some to see,
As Fortune's loaded horn had leap'd among them.

Chris. And think you none suspect your proper sex ?

Cath. Sure on't ; for once suspected, 'twere found out.

Chris. How do you hide the woman ?

Cath. With the man !

It was my girlhood's study. Bless thee, child,
Good shows beat, hollow, bad realities !
When I have dress'd my brows, my upper lip
And chin *en cavalier*, I make a vow,
From such a time to such, I'll play the man.
And so I am ! One quarrell'd with me once—
'Twas when I first began this masquerade—
"Look you," quoth I, "I never quarrel but
"To fight, nor fight except to kill ; and so
"I make my mind up, sir, to die myself ;
"So spare your *carte* and *tierce*.—Set points to hearts,
"And at the signal, in !" His fire I quench'd,
As water turneth iron cinder-black,
In a white heat duck'd sudden into it !

Chris. But of your lovers ?

Cath. Tell me who they are ?

Alas, to have a rival in one's gown !
For 'tis the same thing—'tis your property !
The fabric of the sempstress to outdo
Heaven's fashioning—your body and your face ;
A piece of web, a needle and a thread,
Give worth to them that lies not in themselves !
Yet so it is with dames of noble birth,
And how much more, then, with a wretched serf !
For, though ten times enfranchised, such I am.
But what my betters stoop to, day by day
I spurn, Christina, spurn ! nor deign to wed,
Except the man that loves me for myself !

Chris. And such a man, methinks, Sir Rupert seems.

Cath. Ah ! he is poor !

Chris. And what of that ? He is proud,
And seems as jealous of his poverty
Almost as you are.

Cath. Yes ! He makes no suit.
He ever follows me, yet stands aloof ;
While others lay close siege.

Chris. And of his rivals,
Prefer you any ?

Cath. No. Have I not said,
When tax'd with paying court to me, the rest—
Yea one and all—instead of boasting me,
My person, or my mind, for their excuse—
Set forth my wealth ; and ask if there's a man,
Who would not wed a serf, with such a mine ?

Chris. Sir Rupert sins not thus.

Cath. Sir Rupert ? No !

I bear him hard when I enact the man,
 Which yet he suffers for the sake of Catherine,
 My mad-cap cousin, as I call myself.
 He is jealous of me ; eyes me as he might
 A spaniel like as soon to bite as fawn.
 He never speaks of me—I mean myself—
 Unless enforced ; and then, to end the theme.
 “Sir Rupert,” said I to him once, with more
 Than wont civility—O, could you see
 What a fire-imp I am when I’m a man—
 “Sir Rupert,” said I to him once, “methinks
 “Your friends are sorry judges of good fruit ;
 “And, for an apple, like to choose a crab.
 “Deal frankly with me. Kin, you know, are kin,
 “All the world over ! now, a hug and kiss,
 “And boxing faces next ! It follows not,
 “You know, since I am coz to Catherine,
 “Because she has the toothache, I have one !
 “So, tell me, fair Sir Rupert,—for, indeed,
 “Although a spoil’d boy, as ’tis lawful for
 “A mother’s pet to be, I wish you well,—
 “What think you of my cousin Catherine ?”
 And what was his reply ? Beginning, middle,
 And end, as much as this,—“She is a woman.”
 But, sooth, the answer came in such a tone,
 Each single word might pass for a whole book.

Chris. I am sure Sir Rupert loves you. He has all
 The signs of a lover.

Cath. What are they ?

Chris. He sighs.

Cath. Sighs ! Listen to me ! [*Drawing a deep sigh.*] There,
 girl ! what think you now
 Of that, for a sigh ! and say you I’m in love ?
 I will coin sighs for you, fast as the mint
 Coins ducats. Shows are all uncertain things,
 Unless the cheek indeed grows lank and pale—
 Yet that may be with frequent lack of dinner.
 So, ’tis ’twixt the heart and appetite it lies !
 O for a sign that were infallible,
 And he to show it, whom I would see it on !

Chris. Sir Rupert ?

Cath. What is that to you ? Dear girl,
 Whoe’er it be, I pray that I may love him !
 The countess flies her hawk to-day. I’ll make
 Essay of mine.

Chris. A most strange lady, she !
 A form of flesh, and heart of ice.

Cath. Not so.

A heart, Christina, all possess’d of pride—
 That hath no place for any passion, else.
 Suitors pursue her, still she yields to none,
 But, hard requital ! pays their love with scorn ;

That, out of troops, remains at last but one,
The Prince of Milan.

Chris. Will she ever love?
Her heart is scarce the soil to root love's flower!

Cath. No telling how love thrives! to what it comes!
Whence grows! 'Tis e'en of as mysterious root,
As the pine that makes its lodging of the rock:
Yet there it lives, a huge tree, flourishing,
Where you would think a blade of grass would die!
What is love's poison, if it be not hate?
Yet in that poison, oft is found love's food.
Frowns that are clouds to us, are sun to him!
He finds a music in a scornful tongue,
That melts him more, than softest melody—
Passion perverting all things to its mood,
And, spite of nature, matching opposites!
But, come, we must attire us for the field.
The field!—the field!—Christina, were't to take
The field in love!—a fair and honest fight!
I wonder, be there one true man on the earth?
But if there be, I one true woman know
To match him—were he true as native gold.

Chris. I think Sir Rupert one.

Cath. Sir Rupert!—Umph!
If he were rich, and I as poor as he,
I'd tell you "yes," or "no," within a week.
Heaven keep me from the proof!—I should not like
To find Sir Rupert out! Come. Let me wed
The man that loves me, or else die a maid! [They go out.

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Duke's Castle.*

The COUNTESS—HUON reading to her.

Countess. Give o'er! I hate the poet's argument!
'Tis falsehood—'Tis offence. A noble maid
Stoop to a peasant!—Ancestry, sire, dam,
Kindred and all, of perfect blood, despised
For love!

Huon. The peasant, though of humble stock,
High nature had ennobled.

Countess. What was that?
Mean you to justify it? But, go on!

Huon. Not to offend.

Countess. Offend! No fear of that,
I hope, 'twixt thee and me! I pray you, sir,
To recollect yourself, and be at ease,
And, as I bid you, do. Go on.

Huon. Descent,
You'll grant, is not alone nobility,
Will you not? Never yet was line so long,

But it beginning had; and that was found
 In rarity of nature, giving one
 Advantage over many—aptitude
 For arms, for counsel, so superlative
 As baffled all competitors, and made
 The many glad to follow him as guide
 Or safeguard; and with title to endow him,
 For his high honour or to gain some end
 Supposed propitious to the general weal,
 On those who should descend from him entail'd.
 Not in descent alone, then, lies degree,
 Which from descent to nature may be traced,
 Its proper fount! And that, which nature did,
 You'll grant she may be like to do, again;
 And in a very peasant, yea, a slave,
 Enlodge the worth that roots the noble tree.
 I trust I seem not bold, to argue so.

Countess. Sir, when to me it matters what you seem,
 Make question on't. If you have more to say,
 Proceed—yet mark you how the poet mocks,
 Himself, your advocacy; in the sequel
 His hero is a hind in masquerade!
 He proves to be a lord!

Huon. The poet sinn'd
 Against himself, in that! He should have known
 A better trick, who had at hand his own
 Excelling nature to admonish him,
 Than the low cunning of the common craft.
 A hind, his hero, won the lady's love.
 He had worth enough for that! Her heart was his.
 Wedlock joins nothing, if it joins not hearts.
 Marriage was never meant for coats of arms.
 Heraldry flourishes on metal, silk,
 Or wood. Examine as you will the blood,
 No painting on't is there!—As red, as warm,
 The peasant's as the noble's!

Countess. Dost thou know
 Thou speak'st to me?

Huon. 'Tis, therefore, so I speak.

Countess. And know'st thy duty to me?

Huon. Yes.

Countess. And see'st
 My station, and thine own?

Huon. I see my own.

Countess. Not mine?

Huon. I cannot, for the fair
 O'ertopping height before.

Countess. What height?

Huon. Thyself!

That towerest 'bove thy station!—Pardon me!
 O, wouldst thou set thy rank before thyself?
 Wouldst thou be honour'd for thyself, or that?

Rank that excels its wearer, but degrades him.
 Riches impoverish, that divide respect.
 O, to be cherish'd for oneself alone!
 To owe the love that cleaves to us to nought
 Which fortune's summer—winter—gives or takes!
 To know that, while we wear the heart and mind,
 Feature and form, high Heaven endow'd us with,
 Let the storm pelt us, or fair weather warm,
 We still are loved! Kings, from their thrones cast down,
 Have bless'd their fate, that they were valued for
 Themselves, and not their stations; when some knee,
 That hardly bow'd to them, before,
 Has kiss'd the dust before them, stripp'd of all.

Countess [confused]. I nothing see that's relative in this,
 That bears upon the argument.

Huon. O, much,
 Durst but my heart explain.

Countess. Hast thou a heart?
 I thought thou wast a serf; and, as a serf,
 Hadst thought and will none other than thy lord's;
 And so no heart—that is, no heart of thine own.
 But since thou say'st thou hast a heart, 'tis well!
 Keep it a secret;—let me not suspect
 What, were it e'en suspicion, were thy death.
 Sir, did I name a banquet to thee now,
 Thou lookedst so?

Huon. To die, for thee, were such.

Countess. Sir!

Huon. For his master oft a serf has died,
 And thought it sweet,—and may not, then, a serf
 Say for his mistress, it were bliss to die?

Countess. Thou art presumptuous—very—so no wonder
 If I misunderstood thee. Thou'dst do well
 To be thyself, and nothing more.

Huon. Myself—

Countess. Why, art thou not a serf? What right hast thou
 To set thy person off with such a bearing?
 And move with such a gait?—to give thy brow
 The set of noble's, and thy tongue his phrase?
 Thy betters' clothes sit fairer upon thee
 Than on themselves, and they were made for them.
 I have no patience with thee!—can't abide thee!
 There are no bounds to thy ambition, none!
 How durst thou e'er adventure to bestride
 The war-horse—sitting him, that people say
 Thou, not the knight, appear'st his proper load?
 How durst thou touch the lance, the battle-axe,
 And wheel the flaming falchion round thy head,
 As thou wouldst blaze the sun of chivalry?—
 I know—my father found thy aptitude,
 And humour'd it, to boast thee off? He may chance
 To rue it; and no wonder if he should;

If others' eyes see that they should not see,
Directed by his own.

Huon. O, lady—

Countess. What?

Huon. Heard I aright?

Countess. Aright—what heard'st thou, then?

I would not think thee so presumptuous,
As, through thy pride, to misinterpret me.
It were not for thy health!—Yea, for thy life!
Beware, sir. It would set my quiet blood,
On haste for mischief to thee, rushing through
My veins, did I believe——! Thou art not mad;
Knowing thy vanity, I aggravate it.
Thou know'st 'twere shame, the lowest free-woman
That follows in my train should think of thee?

Huon. I know it, lady.

Countess. That I meant to say,
No more. Don't read such books to me again.
I would you had not learn'd to read, so well,
I had been spared your annotations.
For the future, no reply, when I remark.
Hear, but don't speak—unless you're told—and then
No more than you're ask'd;—what makes the answer up,
No syllable beyond.

Enter Falconer with Hawk.

My falconer! So.

An hour I'll fly my hawk.

Fal. A noble bird,

My lady, knows his bells—is proud of them.

Countess. They are no portion of his excellence;
It is his own! 'Tis not by them he makes
His ample wheel; mounts up, and up, and up,
In spiry rings, piercing the firmament,
Till he o'ertops his prey; then gives his stoop
More fleet and sure than ever arrow sped!
How nature fashion'd him for his bold trade!
Gave him his stars of eyes to range abroad,
His wings of glorious spread to mow the air,
And breast of might to use them! I delight
To fly my hawk. The hawk's a glorious bird;
Obedient—yet a daring, dauntless bird!
You may be useful, sir; so wait upon me!

[*They go out.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Country. On one side a Ruin, on the other
a clump of lofty Trees.*

Enter PRINCE FREDERICK and ULRICK.

Fred. Now thou hast seen her, tell me what thou think'st.
Has she a heart?

Ulrick. I think her flesh and blood.

Fred. Ay, most sweet flesh, and blood most rich!

Ulrick. Then sure
She has a heart.

Fred. But where is it? None yet
Have found it out.

Ulrick. You mean a heart to love?

Fred. Not such a heart, as well no heart at all!

Ulrick. Men tell a mine a hundred fathoms deep,
By certain signs that near the surface lie.
Are flesh and blood more fallible than clay?
Take but her face—There's not a feature on't,
But vouches for the mood. Require you more?
Her limbs and body give you proof on proof.
If these convince you not, essay her voice;
'Tis of the stop befits the melting vein.
There's nought without but with her sex consists,
Pronouncing her its pattern, passing rich!
And can she lack the heart, the want of which
Would turn such affluence to poverty?
Prove nature but a niggard, after all,
Where she should seem to be most bountiful?
She has a heart, sir; and a heart to love!

Fred. How comes it, then, I plead a bootless suit,
And not a boy at wooing? Had I chance,
And were the heart, I sought, unoccupied,
I never fail'd to gain some footing in it,
If not instate myself;—with dames, I own,
Of less degree, ay, and on lighter terms
Than gift of hand for life. Why fail I here?

Ulrick. Hast thou no rival?

Fred. None.

Ulrick. Thou art sure?

Fred. I am.

Dishearten'd at a race that hath no goal,
Or one that seems to fly them, on approach,
My rivals leave the field to me alone.

Ulrick. Thou mayst have rivals whom thou know'st not of.

Fred. No! I have press'd her father oft, thereon,
And learn'd the history, beginning, close
Of every siege of wooing; ending each
In mortified retreat!

Ulrick. You may have rivals
Unknown to him. Love joys in mystery;
And when you think it countless miles away,
Is lurking close at hand.

Fred. You are still at fault.
She has no favour'd lover—cannot have.
The thing is out of chance, impossible!

Ulrick. Call nought impossible, till thou hast proved
That passion hath essay'd it, and been foil'd;
And set this down—nature is nature still,

And, thought to swerve, is, at the bottom, true.
 Thy mistress is not stone, but flesh and blood,
 Wherein resides the juice of sympathy;
 Which, more refined in woman than in man,
 In woman sways measurably stronger!
 The essence of the sex is that, wherein
 They make a gift of their sweet forms and souls—
 The tenderness for some especial one,
 Who then, 'midst millions, they affect alone.
 High natures—and, of such, the highest, hers
 Rarely encounter their affinities,
 And, till they meet them, all approach repel.
 This holds with woman, most, if not alone.
 So, many live unwed, however woo'd;
 Hers has she found already; so you fail,
 Or it is yet to find, and lacks in you.

Fred. She *cannot* love. As many streams will go
 To make one river up, one passion oft
 Predominant, all others will absorb.

Ulrick. What passion, swoln in her, drinks up the rest?

Fred. Pride.

Ulrick. Of her beauty, or her rank, or what?

Fred. Pride of herself! intolerant of all
 Equality—nor that its bounds alone—
 Oppressive to the thing that is beneath her.
 Say that she waives me off, when I advance,
 She spurns the serf that bows to her, at distance.
 Suitor and secretary fare alike!
 I woo for scorn, he for no better serves—
 Nay, rather worse comes off.

Ulrick. Her secretary?

Fred. The only one of all his wretched class
 Her presence brooks; for he is useful to her;
 Reads with a music, as a lute discoursed;
 Writes, as a graver the fair letters traced;
 Translates dark languages—for learning which
 She has a strange conceit; is wise in rare
 Philosophy; has mastery, besides,
 Of all sweet instruments that men essay—
 The hautboy, viol, lute.

Ulrick. A useful man
 Your highness draws! What kind of thing is he
 To look upon?

Fred. 'Faith, proper, sir, in trunk,
 Feature, and limb; to envy, though a serf.
 But, err I not, a most unhappy man,
 And for his service, weary of his life!

Ulrick. O love, a wilful, wayward thing thou art!
 'Twere strange! 'twere very strange!

Fred. What?—What were strange?
 What saidst thou now, apostrophizing love?

Ulrick. I said it was a wilful, wayward thing,

And so it is—fantastic and perverse !
 Which makes its sport of persons and of seasons,
 Takes its own way, no matter right or wrong.
 It is the bee that finds the honey out,
 Where least you'd dream 'twould seek the nectarous store
 And 'tis an arrant masquer—this same love—
 That most outlandish, freakish faces wears,
 To hide its own ! Looks a proud Spaniard now ;
 Now a grave Turk ; hot Ethiopian next ;
 And then phlegmatic Englishman ; and then
 Gay Frenchman ; by-and-by, Italian, at
 All things a song ; and in another skip,
 Gruff Dutchman ;—still is love behind the masque !
 It is a hypocrite !—looks every way
 But that where lie its thoughts !—will openly
 Frown at the thing it smiles in secret on ;
 Shows most like hate, e'en when it most is love ;
 Would fain convince you it is very rock
 When it is water ! ice when it is fire !
 Is oft its own dupe, like a thorough cheat ;
 Persuades itself 'tis not the thing it is ;
 Holds up its head, purses its brows, and looks
 Askant, with scornful lip, hugging itself,
 Enacting high disdain—till suddenly
 It falls on its knees, making most piteous suit
 With hail of tears, and hurricane of sighs,
 Calling on heaven and earth for witnesses
 That it is love, true love, nothing but love !

Fred. You would not say the lady loves the serf ?

Ulrick. I would say nothing in particular,
 Save upon proof. Let me together note
 The serf and lady ; I shall speak to the point,
 Or, baffled, hold my peace.

Fred. To that intent
 I sent for thee,—for thou art keen of sight
 To pry into the inmost thoughts of men,
 And find the proper ends towards which they aim,
 Howe'er dissembled by assumed purpose.

Ulrick. Your pardon, sir ; your father bade me come
 To warn you, in these times of turbulence,
 He means to stand aloof and take no part
 Between the barons and the Empress,—so
 Your course you know to shape. What company
 Is this ?

Fred. The countess flies her hawk to-day,
 And these are falconers in advance of her.
 Those nearest us, observe. The lady first,
 Is a rich serf, supposed love-daughter to
 The former duke, who left her well endow'd.
 Those with her are her suitors ; but with none
 She'll mate, believing that her wealth is prized
 Beyond herself,—nor does she widely err

Though some might think her beauty dower enough!
 There is one who follows her, indeed for love,
 A man of heart; a gentleman, but poor,
 Who his revenue spends upon his back;
 I say he *follows* her. He woos her not,
 Through pride, 'tis said, lest he be thought to hunt
 The dross so much he needs;—whence I esteem
 His chance the best. Mark! he is last of all.
 Let us retire a space; there's company
 Enough without us here. Some minutes yet
 Before the countess will alight, and then
 Remains the hill to climb. So bright a day,
 Methinks, will scarce go by without a frown. [*They retire.*]

Enter CATHERINE, SIR CONRAD, SIR OTTO, *and* SIR RUPERT.

Cath. Spy you my hawk? 'Twas here he struck his bird,
 And vanish'd from my sight.

Sir Otto. Or I mistake,
 Or from his stoop he rose again and skimm'd
 The brow of yonder copse.

Sir Con. I mark'd not if
 He soar'd a second time.

Cath. Were I a man,
 And waited on a lady, used to hawk,
 I'd keep her bird in sight! Sir Rupert, what
 Say you? Where shall we go and seek my hawk,
 Or lurks he hereabouts?

Sir Rup. I saw him not
 At all.

Cath. Not see my hawk at all? You'll do
 For a falconer! So! Had I that boy,
 My hair-brain'd cousin, whom you say you know,
 And fair Sir Rupert hath such fancy for,
 He plays the wasp so well—a novel taste!
 As I can vouch he is indeed no bee,
 To pay you with his honey for his sting!—
 Had I that scape-grace with me, he would find
 My hawk, ere you began to look for it.—
 How loth these friends are to part company!
 Now will I scatter them. [*Aside.*] Who finds my hawk,
 Deserves to kiss my hand, and he shall do it.

[*SIR OTTO and SIR CONRAD run off.*]

What! like you not my wages, sir, you stand
 Nor make a proffer of your services!

Sir Rup. To kiss your hand would be most rich reward,
 If love's rich gift to him who sought your love;
 But, if love's gift, to one alone 'twere made,
 And not to any one!

Cath. Love's gift!—What's that?
 Most thankless proffer made by empty hand!
 Give me bright diamonds, I shall have bright eyes.

When fetch'd desert its value and was poor?—
 A hundred years ago?—but it was left
 A legacy, and then they found it out!
 The world they say is an old churl,—'Tis false.
 Can you afford to feast, you shall be feasted;
 You shall not dine at home one day out of three;
 Nay, you may shut up house, for bed and board.

Sir Rup. You are a *young ascetic*.

Cath. Am I so?

Well, if I am, 'tis in the family—
 Witness my cousin, whom you love so well.
 A young ascetic say you? Sir, I am.
 A young Diogenes in petticoats.
 I have strings of axioms. Here are more for you.
 They say that beauty needs not ornament;
 But sooth she fares the better having it,
 Although she keeps it in her drawer.

Sir Rup. Indeed?

Cath. Indeed, and very deed! For I have known
 Bracelets and rings do miracles, where nature
 Play'd niggard, and did nothing, or next to it;
 Beat lotions in improving of the skin,
 And mend a curve, the surgeon had given up
 As hopeless.

Sir Rup. Nay, you speak in irony.

Cath. I speak in truth, speaking in irony;
 For irony is but a laughing truth,
 Told of a worthless thing! Will you have more?
 You shall then. Have you never heard it said,
 Or never dream'd you such a thing as this—
 That fortune's children never yet lack'd wit,
 Virtue, grace, beauty—though it tax'd the owners
 To find them out? Once an exception chanced,
 I know not in what year or part of the world,
 But, while men stared at the anomaly,
 One parasite, less comet-struck than the rest,
 Turn'd up a heap of rubbish of all things
 Good men and wise and men of taste eschew,
 And found them underneath! Take this along though,
 The owner never knew their value, for
 He ne'er had need to go to market with them.
 Why, what a man you are, Sir Rupert! Fie!
 What! not a word to say? Let's change the theme then:
 The argument shall be, that you're in love;
 The which shall I affirm while you deny.
 I say you are in love. Come, prove me wrong!

Sir Rup. I never argue only for the sake
 Of argument.

Cath. Come, come, you have a tongue!
 You are in love—I'll prove it by fifty things.
 And first and foremost, you deny it, sir;
 A certain sign, with certain accidents—

As dulness, moodiness, moroseness, shyness.
 I'd stake my credit on one single fact
 Thou bearest out to admiration—
 A lover is the dullest thing on earth!
 Who but a lover—or his antipode,
 A wise man—ever found out that the use
 Of his tongue was to hold it? Thou must be in love,
 And for one sovereign reason, after which
 I'll give no other—thou dost follow me!

Sir Rup. Madam, although I may not use my tongue,
 I do my eyes and ears.

Cath. But not your feet.
 Will you not seek my hawk, and run a chance
 To kiss my hand—or would it trouble you,
 In case you found my hawk, to use your lips?
 But I forget 'tis now your turn to speak,
 And prove my oaks of arguments are reeds.
 Have you no word?—or am not I worth one?
 Or must I take your side, and beat myself?
 I'll take your side, then. You are not in love,
 Loving yourself too well!

Sir Rup. You wrong me there.

Cath. Why, see what pains you take with your person! How
 You dress!

Sir Rup. 'Tis not my vanity, but pride.
 I am far too poor to put mean habit on.
 Whose garments wither, shall meet faded smiles
 Even from the worthy, so example sways.
 So the plague poverty is loath'd; and shunn'd
 The luckless wight who wears her fatal spot!
 Want, but look full; else you may chance to starve—
 Unless you'll stoop to beg. You force me, lady,
 To make you my severe confessional.
 From such prostration never can I rise
 The thing I was before. Farewell!

Cath. [*Looks out.*] Farewell!
 What! go not to fetch my hawk, and there
 He sits upon his quarry, new alit?
 Or want you earnest of your wages? Well,
 There, kiss my hand, and go and fetch my hawk,
 And then be paid in full.

Sir Rup. If I could speak—

Cath. My hawk were off again, ere you had done;
 So I would lose his service—thou my thanks!

Sir Rup. Nay, I'll secure him straight.

[*Goes out.*]

Cath. I gave him pain,
 Though he has borne it with a noble heart!
 I hope he will not make me weep in turn.
 Symptoms I feel of something like a shower—
 A slight one—but it must not fall. They are gone.
 A noble heart! a very noble heart!

Enter SIR RUPERT.

Sir Rup. I have miss'd the hawk—he has taken wing again.

Cath. 'Twas not your fault—you did the best you could.
I am not angry. There's my hand for you.
Mark'd you which course he took? Then, come along,
We'll hunt for him together.

Sir Rup. Stop—it lowers!
There's shelter here.

[*SIR RUPERT and CATHERINE approach the Ruins—
Enter the COUNTESS and HUON, with Attendants—
PRINCE FREDERICK and ULRICK come forward a
little, but so as not to be noticed.*

Countess. [*To SIR RUP.*] Will there not be a storm?

Huon. I am sure there will.

Countess. I ask'd not you to speak! When you should
speak,

It shall be shown—it shall be plain. Be sure
It is so, ere you give your counsel, sir.

[*HUON retires to the group of trees, and leans against
one of them.*

Do you not think there's threatening of a storm?

Sir Rup. Yes, lady. When the heavens look troubled thus,
Earth can't be long at peace.

Fred. The only man
She brooketh speech from, with complacency.
Observe her, now, when I accost her. Madam,
Will't please you take my escort to your coach,
At the hill-foot I see attending on you?

Countess [*haughtily*]. The rain is on, sir; I am better here.

SIR OTTO and SIR CONRAD enter in haste.

Sir Otto. A storm! a storm! Those pitch-black clouds that
speed

In wild career to meet the sun, as though
In envy of his light to blot him out,
Come right against the wind—a token they
Bring thunder!

Sir Con. Yes; I saw a forkéd flash,
And while I held my breath and listen'd, heard
The distant clap. [*To SIR OTTO.*] Avoid the trees; their tops
With boastful towering, dare the threat'ning bolt
To strike them!

[*SIR OTTO and SIR CONRAD approach the ruins.*

Ulrick. Do you note? She does not move—
What keeps her there? Is that the scornéd serf,
Leans drooping 'gainst the trunk of yonder tree,
That lends him treacherous shelter?—Clear as day!

Fred. 'Tis dark as night!

Ulrick. What?—O, the storm! My lord,

I meant not that—your doubts are clearing up.
Look at the serf and lady!

Cath. [*To SIR RUP.*] Pray you speak
To the Countess—tell her she's in danger, there,
Standing so near the trees.

Sir Rup. Madam—

Cath. Apace

The storm comes on! 'Twill soon be overhead—
Ay! there's the thunder now, and loud enough.
She heard not! Call to her again! She bears
That *you* accost her.

Sir Rup. She is fond of you.

Cath. Yes; but you mark'd her scorn of Huon, now!

Sir Rup. Forgive me, madam! but—I pray you, madam!
Come from beneath the trees. It lightens fast—
A bolt may strike you, madam!

Countess. Sir, I hear you.

Ulrick. The peril of the serf transfixes her!
Her life, be sure, is only part of his!

A common act of charity it were,
Command him thence; but, conscious of the cause,
Stronger than charity, that would prompt the act,
And fearing to betray it worse than death;
She perils her own life! It is not right
To leave her there—go to her—take her thence!

Fred. Your pardon, lady, but you must not brave
The lightning. Come into the open space:
There's shelter, with less chance of penalty,
Beneath this time-worn ruin.

[*Thunder and lightning.*
Heavens, how near!

Almost together came the clap and flash!
The trees are all on fire—The serf is struck!

[*HUON staggers from the tree—the COUNTESS rushes to
him, clasping him.*

Countess No! no!—O Heaven, he's dead! why would he
stand

Beneath the tree!—What, Huon!—Speak to me!
Show me thou hear'st me! Let me see some signs
Of life! Why, Huon! Huon! He is dead!

Ulrick. Lady, he is not dead, but only stunn'd.
'Twas but a shock, although a powerful one.
His colour comes—You see his eyelids ope—
So please you, leave the charge of him to me.

Countess. I thank you, sir—am sorry such a load
Should burden you. Would some of my attendants
Were here, to ease you on't. How dread a thing
Is death, when sight on't makes one not oneself!
Grows it not lighter, sirs?—Ay, there's the sky.
Almost as soon as come, the storm is gone.
Pray leave him to himself. 'Twas but a shock;
It shames me, such a load should burthen you!

Ulrick. As yet, he cannot stand.

Countess. Indeed?—O!—ay!—
 It was a very heavy shock. I have a horror,
 And always had, of lightning. Do you know
 It takes away my wits? Did you not feel
 As I did, Catherine, when they thought the lightning
 Had kill'd the serf? A dreadful thing is death!
 And most of all, by lightning! Where is my hawk?
 O, they had charge to bring him after me,
 And here they come! Let's meet them, Catherine.
 [*Going, stops and turns to look at HUON.*]

Ulrick. He still grows better, madam.

Countess. Who, sir?—O,
 The serf?—Why, Catherine, where's your hawk?

Cath. I have lost him.

Countess. I hope the lightning has not struck him. Come:
 We'll have fair weather yet.

Enter two or three Attendants.

Go, some of you,
 Relieve his lordship from his load.

[*Two of the Attendants take HUON, and lead him off,
 the COUNTESS watching.*]

Ulrick. You see
 He is unhurt.

Countess. My lord?—I see.—You take
 Great interest in my serf. The sun is out;
 My hawk against the field! Come, Catherine.

[*All go out, except FREDERICK and ULRICK.*]

Ulrick. You see, my lord; and seeing comprehend.
 Straight will I to the Duke, and freely tell him
 A kingdom to a hawk, she loves the serf!

[*They go out, severally.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter DUKE and ULRICK.

Duke. She loves the serf? Impossible!

Ulrick. My lord,
 'Tis true.

Duke. It cannot be! Her pride alone
 Forbids belief. More loftily, my lord,
 The stateliest of all her ancestors
 Ne'er wore his rank, than she.

Ulrick. She loves the serf.

Duke. Give me some reason stronger than averment.

Ulrick. Such I have given already. What, my liege
 But love, such contradiction could beget?
 When did cold scorn look, speak, and act like love?
 Woman or man is known by fits and starts,

More than by habits, which may be put on ;
 For those so take the judgment off its guard,
 That inmost thoughts are shown. With care for him,
 She all forgot herself. Had doubt remain'd,
 It had vanish'd when assurance of his safety
 Restored collectedness, which brought with it
 Slight of the man that, but a moment gone,
 Seem'd essence of her being.

Duke. You are right.

'Tis the solution of the mystery,
 That, with the progress of the season, comes not
 Fulfilment of its promises ; and no sign
 Of blight or canker, but the blossom rich
 As ever knit into the perfect fruit !
 Her girlhood, longer past than some would own—
 Put forth a bloom like many another's prime,
 That often, *then*, I fancied love would come.
 When her prime came, nor love along with it,
 With many a suitor have I sigh'd to think
 Her breast was ne'er intended lodge for that
 It seem'd most fitted for, and little dream'd
 The guest we miss'd, already was within.

Ulrick. And never fear'd the serf ?

Duke. No.

Ulrick. Was't not strange ?

Duke. Not to consider him as I did ; creature
 Made for her pride to vent its mood upon—
 Her pride insufferable—which alone
 Seem'd fruit of her capricious womanhood.

Ulrick. That foil'd you.

Duke. When the serf was but a boy—
 His mistress then an infant—taken with
 His forward parts, I put them to the test
 Of scholarship, which they robustly stood,
 A hundred-fold repaying cultivation ;
 Nor stopp'd I there ; but as he grew to manhood,
 Gave training to him in those exercises,
 Wherein our youths of gentle blood indulge—
 Preludes to feats in peace, and deeds in war—
 That I might boast a serf supreme in arms ;
 As many a knight unwillingly has own'd,
 Accepting challenge to make proof of him.

Ulrick. What didst propose him for ?

Duke. Instructor first,
 Then page and secretary to my child.

Ulrick. Instructor, didst thou say ? Companion of
 Her hours of privacy ? Her age was then—

Duke. Twelve, if I err not.—Yes ; twelve times I then
 Had bless'd the day that gave my daughter birth.

Ulrick. Her spring was mellowing into summer then,
 Young summer ; at whose genial glow, the heart
 Finds wishes and affections shooting up,

Known but by name before, and thrills and swells
With rapture of the strange and plenteous verdure.
She prosper'd with his aid?

Duke. O, wondrously.

Ulrick. And loved at first her tutor?

Duke. Much: but soon

A change, which grew with her, the nearer she
Approach'd to womanhood. 'Twas distance first;
Then sullenness; then scorn, which she gave sway to
Incontinent, and chiefly of those feats
Of high address wherein he match'd the noble,
And which it seem'd her pastime he should practise
For recompense of aggravated spite.

Ulrick. Which he endured for love!

Duke. He dies! That ends it.

Ulrick. Yes; confirming it,
Perhaps. Beware, sir, of a tragedy
So deep! Her scorn may melt at it, and help
Her tears to keep them flowing on until
She weeps her life away. You must not play
With a first passion, once it has taken root.
For it strikes deep—to the foundations even
Of the heart—entwining with the fibres there,
Of life itself, that, pluck the other up,
These, often, come along.

Duke. He shall to exile,
Thousands of miles away, 'midst snows and deserts!

Ulrick. So may you tempt her, sir, with pity for him,
To turn a pilgrim—take up staff and scrip,
And follow him. She scorns him for the scorn
Which others' eyes behold his station with.
Removed from their regards, her rank unknown,
For her rich charms were his embrace, a lodge
She'd change your palace for.

Duke. Impossible!

Ulrick. O, never did achievement rival Love's,
For daring enterprise and execution.
It will do miracles; attempt such things
As make ambition, fiery as it is,
Dull plodding tameness, in comparison.
Talk of the miser's passion for his store—
'Tis milk and water to the lover's, which
Defies the mines of earth and caves of ocean
To match its treasure! Talk of height, breadth, depth—
There is no measure for the lover's passion,
No bounds to what 'twill do!

Duke. Advise me, then,
What's best.

Ulrick. Induce the serf to marry. That
Were cure, in the end, for your fair daughter's passion;
Whose wound were his desertion, so resentment
Would blunt the edge of disappointed love.

For, doubt not, though she ne'er espouses him,
She trusts so far to keep him to herself,
As that he ne'er shall pillow with another.

Duke. 'Tis done. I have a bride for him, at once.
One of his class, enfranchised by the will
Of my cousin, who preceded me; indeed,
Supposed love-daughter to him, and endow'd
With wealth of his, that makes her coveted
As fitting mate, by men of gentle blood.
Her humour 'tis to keep her freedom still;
But to my wish, as soon as known, she'll bend,
Aware I may encoil her in the mesh
My cousin's love or bounty freed her from.
But say I wed the serf to Catherine,
What profit then? My child may still persist
To keep her virgin state.

Ulrick. I should commit
To Heaven the election of her husband;—let
The tournament determine who shall wed her.

Duke. Thereto I have made provision in my will;
And further, sir, as I am due to death
Now many a year, and momentarily
Expect his summons, pray you keep by me
The little space I have to tarry yet;
For on your wisdom I have all reliance.
Your prince, I know, will not gainsay me, here.
And when it pleaseth Heaven to leave my body
Without the breath, it has inherited
So long; no minute lose, but take occasion
Of the fresh flow of sorrow in my child—
When her young heart is soften'd, and will mould
Itself unto his will, who is no more—
To break to her, on this particular head,
My dying testament.

Ulrick. I shall remember.

Duke. So please you, I shall join you with the Empress,
Liege lady and good cousin to my child,
Executor.

Ulrick. I shall discharge the trust.

Duke. My lord, send Huon to me. Question not,
Advise me not. He marries, or he dies. [*ULRICK goes out.*]
Life spent to waste! My pride become my shame!
For this I rear'd her—rear'd to tow'ring thoughts.
A gasp of being only left, and that
To sigh that being has been spent in vain
For her, last shoot of an illustrious tree!
I loved my serf, was vain of him, and made
My vanity to smile through his deserts;
And now, their light is cloud to all my hopes.
Through mine own pride my high aspirations fall.
They shall not fall! Good-bye to ruth! He dares
To love my child—to covet her, I grudged
Surrender of to those could boast estate

Equal to mine ! Born at my very foot,
How durst he lift his eyes so giddy high !
He comes. I see ! The passion never yet
I dream'd of, stares upon me, in his look,
His air, his gait. 'Tis dead—or he must die !

Enter HUON.

Huon !

Huon. My lord ?

Duke. I have been thinking of thee.

Huon. My lord is ever good.

Duke. I have a notion

'Twould profit thee to marry.

Huon. Marry !

Duke. Yes.

Huon. I first must love.

Duke. And hast thou never loved ?

Why art thou silent ? Wherefore holds thy tongue
Its peace, and not thy cheek ?

Huon. My cheek !

Duke. It talks !

A flush pass'd o'er it, as I spoke to thee ;
And now it talks again—and on the ground
Thou cast'st thine eye. "Thou first must love"—My friend,
Thou art in love already ! Art thou not ?
Art thou not, Huon ?—Never mind, but keep
Thy secret.—I have fix'd that thou shalt marry.

Huon. My lord——

Duke. [*Interrupting him.*] I know it will advantage thee,
And I have look'd around my court to find
A partner for thee, and have lit on one.

Huon [*more earnestly*]. My lord——

Duke. [*Interrupting him again.*] She has beauty, Huon, she
has wealth ;

And that which qualifies her better still—
As of unequal matches discords grow—
She's of thy own class, Huon, she is a serf.

Huon [*impetuously*]. My lord——

Duke. [*Interrupting, indignantly.*] My serf !—How now ?—
Wouldst thou rebel ?

Huon. Rebel, my lord !

Duke. I trust I was deceived !

I did not see defiance in thine eye,
And hear it on thy tongue ? Thou wouldst not dare
So much as harbour wish to thwart thy lord,
Much less intent ? Thou know'st him !—know'st thyself !
Thou mayst have scruples—That thou canst not help ;
But thou canst help indulging them, in the face
Of thy lord's will. And so, as 'tis my will
Thou marry straight, and I have found thy match,
I'll draw a paper up, where thou shalt make
The proffer of thy hand to Catherine,
And thou shalt sign it, Huon.

[*Writes.*

Huon. That I were dead!
 O, what is death, compared to slavery!
 Brutes may bear bondage—*They* were made for it,
 When Heaven set man above them; but no mark,
 Definite and indelible, it put
 Upon one man to mark him from another,
 That he should live his slave! O heavy curse!
 To have thought, reason, judgment, feelings, tastes,
 Passions, and conscience, like another man,
 And not have equal liberty to use them,
 But call *his* mood their master! Why was I born
 With passion to be free—with faculties
 To use enlargement—with desires that cleave
 To high achievements—and with sympathies
 Attracting me to objects fair and noble,—
 And, yet, with power over myself, as little,
 As any beast of burden? Why should I live?
 There are of brutes themselves that will not tame
 So high in them is nature;—whom, the spur
 And lash, instead of curbing, only chafe
 Into prouder mettle;—that will let you kill them,
 Ere they will suffer you to master them.
 I am a man, and live!

Duke. Here, Huon, sign,
 And Catherine is your wife.

Huon. I will not sign.

Duke. How now, my serf!

Huon. My lord, I am a man;
 And, as a man, owe duty, higher far
 Than that I owe to thee, which Heaven expects
 That I discharge. Didst thou command me murder,
 Steal, commit perjury, or even lie,
 Should I do it, though thy serf? No! To espouse her,
 Not loving her, were murder of her peace.
 I will not sign for that! With like default,
 To compass mastery of her effects,
 Were robbery. I will not sign for that!
 To swear, what I must swear, to make her mine,
 Were perjury at the very altar. Therefore
 I will not sign! To put forth plea of love,
 Which not a touch of love bears witness to,
 Were uttering a lie. And so, my lord,
 I will not sign at all!—O, good my liege,
 My lord, my master, ask me not to sign!
 My sweat, my blood, use without sparing; but
 Leave me my heart—a miserable one
 Although it be! Coerce me not in that,
 To make me do the thing my heart abhors!
 I beg no more!

[*The DUKE draws his sword, and resolutely approaches*
HUON. At the same minute the COUNTESS enters,
unperceived, and stops short.

Duke. Huon, I love thee,
And would not do thee harm, unless compell'd.
Thou shouldst not play with me, and shalt not. Take,
Therefore, thy choice—death, or the paper.

Huon. Death!

Duke. Thou makest thy mind up quickly, in a strait.

Huon. I do not wish to live.

*[Opens his vest, takes the point of the DUKE'S sword,
and places it opposite his heart.]*

Set here thy point;

'Tis right against my heart! Press firm and straight;
The more, the kinder! *[A pause.]*

Duke. As thou wishest death,
I will not kill thee for thy disobedience.
An hour I grant for calm reflection. Use it.
If, on the lapse of that brief space, I find
The page without addition, thou mayst learn
That even slavery hath its degrees,
Which make it sometimes sweet! Our felons throng
The galleys; but 'tis hard, or we shall find
A bench and oar for thee! *[He goes out.]*

Huon. My lord, come back!
My lord! What now my mind, be sure 'twill be
At the end of the hour! of the day! of my life!—My lord!
He does not hear, or will not. Most sweet cause
Of most insufferable misery,
Wouldst thou not weep at this? Couldst thou look on,
And keep pride sitting in thy woman's eye—
The proper throne of pity—which for me,
The melting queen has yet refused to fill,
But to a stern usurper all abandon'd!—
Wouldst thou not weep? Or would my name alone—
My sole condition set 'gainst all myself;
The vivid thoughts, the feelings sensitive,
The quick affections, passions of a man,
Despite his misery of birthright; flesh,
Warm, warm; of as high vitality as though
His lot had been an heirdom to a throne—
Would that, prevailing 'gainst such odds as these,
Prevent thee? Yes! Thou wouldst not weep for me.
O, knew I what would make thee! Would my corpse?
Then to thy father! own my passion for thee,
Tell him his serf aspires to love his daughter,
Boasts of it, though he sends him to the galleys,
Will glory in it, chain'd beside the felon,
Ay, with the tasker's whip whirling above him,
Reiterate it, when he threatens me,
And when again he threatens, justify it,
On the broad rights of common human nature,
Till with his own hand he transfixes me! *[Following the DUKE.]*

Countess. *[Interposing.]* Stop, Huon!—What's the matter?

Huon. Huon—Huon!

Didst thou say Huon—and with gentleness?
 Madam—my mistress—I am your slave!—I am nothing
 But the poor serf!

Countess. See if that door is free
 From list'ners.

Huon. [*Going to the door.*] There is no one here.

Countess. Come in,
 And shut it again.

Huon. 'Tis shut.

Countess. Now, what's the matter
 With my father and you?

Huon. He bade me sign that paper,
 And I refused.

Countess. What is it? Let me see it.

Huon. [*Hands the paper, and watches the COUNTESS while she reads.*] How her eye fastens on the writing—seems
 To grasp it, as her hand the paper! What!
 Did she start? She did! O, wherefore?—What is this?
 Her sweet face, that just now was all a calm,
 Shows signs of brooding tempest! Yes, 'tis on—
 Lowers on her brow, and flashes on her cheek,
 Like cloud and lightning. How her bosom heaves!
 What makes it heave? She has let the paper drop,
 Yet there she stands as though she held it yet!
 And where, but now, all was astir—now, all
 Again is stillness! Dare I speak to her?
 She is not like to faint—no—no—she breathes!
 Her haughty spirit wakes in her again,
 Towering, alas! as ne'er it did before.

Countess. [*After a violent struggle, giving way.*] Huon, I die!

Huon. Heavens!—Mercy!

Countess. [*Bursting into tears.*] It is over.
 Do not speak to me! Let my tears flow on!

Huon. Flow they for me?

Countess. I told you not to speak.

Huon. Sweet Heaven! your voice is tears!
 Your looks are tears; your air, your motions, all
 Are tears! floods! floods! to those that course your cheeks,
 And fall more bright than diamonds on the hands
 Which now I clasp to thee in supplication,
 That thou wilt deign this once vouchsafe me audience,
 To give my fatal passion vent before thee—
 For years pent up within my wretched breast—
 And then I'm mute for ever!

Countess. Huon, peace—
 I know thou lov'st me!

Huon. Thou know'st it, dost thou?
 And sayest it!—and mildly sayest it!
 Not with a tone of scorn, not with a threat,
 Nor accent yet of cold indifference
 For the poor serf, who, body, soul, and all,
 Not being worth a tithe of thee, yet dares

To love thee!—dares to wish for thee!—yes, wish,
 Although he knows thee out of reach of him,
 As the sun!—as the stars—a million, million times
 Beyond the sun! The poor despised serf,
 Despised of himself—of thee—of every one—
 Thou see'st he loves thee, and thou deign'st to say it!
 Say it with pity—with most tender pity!
 Behold'st him kneeling at thy feet, and know'st
 The passion throws him there, and suffer'st him
 To stay there!—Let him die there! Let him die
 At thy feet! *[Falls at her feet.]*

Countess. Rise, Huon!—Huon!—Hear'st thou me?
 And dost thou not obey me? Wilt thou not?
 Listen to me!—Lo, I entreat thee, Huon,
 By the love thou bear'st me, rise!

Huon. *[Rising to his knee.]* Again! “By the love
 “Thou bear'st me, Huon!” And thy accents did sound
 Like those of one that love repaid with love!
 Thou start'st at that! and terror, all at once,
 Looks from the eyes, whence something look'd before
 I'd give the vision of my own to see there
 But for one other moment, so it set
 My soul a-blaze with hope!—Can I believe it,
 My arm encircles thee!

Countess. *[With forced dignity.]* Remove it.

Huon. Ah!

Thou changest!—Yes!—Thou art returning fast
 To what thou wast before.

Countess. No, Huon—but
 Obey me—kneel no longer at my feet,
 But rise. *[He rises.]* It pleaseth me thou dost my will.
 Huon, wilt do my will?

Huon. Wilt do thy will?
 It is the nature of my blood as much
 As its colour—current! In thy every mood,
 I will obey thee, lady.

Countess. Promise me
 Thou'lt do the thing I bid thee.

Huon. What is it?

Countess. Promise me first, and then I'll name it to thee.
 Huon, wilt do the thing I wish?

Huon. I will.

Countess. But swear thou'lt do it.

Huon. Yes. What shall I swear by?

Countess. Thy love for me!

Huon. Then, by my love for thee,
 I'll do the thing thou bidd'st me.

Countess. Sign the paper!—

Thou art about to speak—but don't—don't, Huon,
 As thou wouldst not offend me; as 'twould grieve me—
 I won't say, anger me—that thou *couldst* offend me.
 Listen! I'll bear that thou shouldst love me, if

Thou signest—else command thee ever from me.
Wilt thou not? Speak not—give me acts, not words.
Or sign it, or begone!

Huon. I'll keep my word,
And so do both. *[Takes paper to table, and peruses it.]*

Enter Attendant.

Countess. *[To Attendant.]* Is Catherine in the castle?
If not, go to her house, and bring her hither.

Attendant. She is in the castle. Now she enter'd it.

Countess. Conduct her to my chamber. Stay. My chaplain—

Tell him, and do it straight, to wait me in
The chapel. Tarry. See that the chapel else
Is clear—Make sure of it. That ascertain'd,
Take post at the door, and mind that no one enter,
Except the serf and the two ladies that
Shall follow him. I shall be one. A mouse
Besides, thou diest! *[Attendant goes out.]*

Huon. *[Signs paper.]* It is sign'd—Farewell! *[Going.]*

Countess. Stay!—To the full thou must redeem thy pledge.
Unless thou marriest, it is not sign'd;
The paper is but air, the ink but water,
Without fulfilling of the written deed;
And thou but jugglest with me, shamefully,
Saying thou lovest me, and for thy oath
Staking thy love, and leaving all undone
As thou hadst sworn by nothing. Thou art bound
To marry Catherine, failing which to do,
Thou dost not love me,—thou art not a man.

Huon. I am indifferent to what I do.
All things of earth are now the same to me;
Good, bad, love, hate, wrong, kindness, life, or death.
What hour you please, I'll marry Catherine. *[Going.]*

Countess. Now! *[Stopping him.]*
This very moment! She will meet thee in
The chapel, whither thou must straight repair.
Thou wilt?

Huon. I will.

Countess. The chaplain thou wilt find
Expecting thee—and, if he be not come
Already, still he will be sure to come.
Thou wilt not juggle with me?

Huon. No.

Countess. Thou darrest not—
I mean, thou darrest not, as thou lovest me.

Huon. I'll keep the oath, and then, farewell for ever!

Countess. 'Tis done! *[Aside.—Goes out.]*
[Sinks into a chair.]

Enter DUKE.

Duke. Where's Huon?

Countess. Gone to do thy will.

Duke. Who work'd this miracle? I never dream'd
He would conform to it! Who work'd it?

Countess. I.

Duke. Thou?

Countess. [*Giving him the paper.*] There.

Duke. My child! Thou art thy father's child,
My proud child still! Where is he?

Countess. In the chapel,
By this. The chaplain waits upon him there.
Catherine is in my room, expecting me.
So please you, sir, since I have help'd the match
Thus far, I'll e'en o'erlook the ceremony.

Duke. Do so.

My barque no more is fit for sea;
A ripple threatens it with foundering,
Almost 'tis founder'd now. Did Huon tell thee
How he withstood me?

Countess. All is known to me.
But pray you, for the sake of Catherine,
Grant him his freedom. 'Tis not meet her husband
Should drag the chain, hath been unloosed from her.

Duke. This document accomplishes your wish,
E'en now prepared to win him to my purpose.
I give it freely, for I love the boy;
Ay, now entirely love him! See him married;
And may he plight a happy, happy troth
To her he weds! My child, I am failing fast.
'Tis time—don't heed!—go to the chapel—and
My blessing on the errand takes thee thither.

Enter Attendant.

Ha!—you are come in time, sir! I shall need
Your help to my chamber. Tell the boy, I bless him!
Come hither, bless thee, too! And bless the work
Thou goest to do! While I remember it,
Regard Count Ulrick as thy father's friend,
One of his household now, with sanction of
The Prince of Milan. I am very feeble!
Must to my chamber!

Countess. [*Rushing towards him, and kneeling.*] Bless me
again! my father!

Duke. Again, my child?—Again! [*Blessing her.*]
Heaven bless thee! It is wiser—better knows
Thy good—can better help thee to't—ay!
Better than thy father! May it bless thee, then,
And be its will, before thy father's, done! [*Goes out.*]

Countess. Now, fail not Catherine, and the die is cast!
[*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*The Corridor of the Castle.**Enter* SIR CONRAD.

Sir Con. What calls the chaplain to his sacred post,
And why this privacy? About to pass
The porch, I was admonish'd 'twas forbid
To all to enter! 'Tis no day of fast,
No hour of customary rites! 'Tis nought
To me. I only wonder at its strangeness.

Sir Rup. [*Entering.*] Where is the Prince of Milan?

Sir Con. In the courtyard—
Unless departed thence this moment.

Sir Rup. Find him,
And bring him to the chamber of the Duke.
If on your way you meet the Duke's physician,
In search of whom I go, he, too, is summon'd,
And tell him so.

Sir Con. Why, what's the matter?

Sir Rup. Woe!
The Duke!—the Duke!—No question, but away!

SCENE III.—*Chamber of the Countess.**Enter* CHRISTINA and the COUNTESS's Maid.

Chris. My mistress marry Huon?

Maid. Even so!

Now hand in hand with him before the priest;
Unless the knot be tied already—said
The blessing and amen.

Chris. No bridemaids?

Maid. Yes,
My lady.

Chris. What! the Countess! bridemaids she
To Catherine that was before a serf!
Yet she was ever fond of Catherine.

Maid. You should have seen them both as forth they went,
Like two sweet sisters for the altar veil'd.

Chris. A sudden marriage this!

Maid. And lonely, too;
None but the principals admitted—friends
Nor attendants!

Chris. It is strange! Well. Huon gets
A wealthy wife—a freewoman, to boot;
And, sooth to say, a worthy husband, she—
Ay, were she better still—for many a prince
Looks not his rank so well as Huon would,
Were he one. Softly—they return—yes.

Maid. No;
My mistress comes alone. How slow she moves!

Enter the COUNTESS faint ; her Maid runs to support her.

Countess. Help to unveil me, girl. I cannot lift
My hand to my head—and I want air! Remove
My veil. There! Now I breathe!—A minute only,
And all the world seems changed. Is this my room?
Art thou my waiting-maid?—Am I myself?
Where is my father?

Maid. In his chamber, lady.
He is complaining.

Countess. He is very old.
His life spun out into a very film.
I did not gainsay him! Thank Heaven for that!
I would that I could go to him, but sooth
My limbs have done their best to bring me hither.
I am next to dead; almost dissolved to nothing.
Is that Christina? Girl, what do you here?
Home with all haste; your mistress there before you
Waits your assistance with most instant need.

Chris. It is all wonder.

Countess. Art thou gone?

Chris. I am!

[Curtseys and goes out.]

COUNT ULRICK *enters.*

Ulrick. Madam!

Countess. Count Ulrick, is it you? I am glad
To see you, sir; my father told me, or
I dreamt it, he design'd to take you, sir,
Into his service. If 'tis so, I'm glad of it.

Ulrick. I grieve to think my office was a brief one!

Countess. Your office was a brief one!—Speak!—alas!
When silence is a substitute for speech,
The heart must be o'er full of joy or pain!
Enough. I read your errand in your looks—
I am an orphan.

Ulrick. Madam, 'twas a debt
Long due to nature.

Countess. Still, sir, we must grieve
To see it paid. At what a time to leave me!
I cannot pay him half his due of sorrow.
My heart is spent—benumb'd! this shaft of Fate
Lights on a corpse!—a corpse! Alas, my father! *[Weeps.]*

[A pause—Enter Attendant, hastily.]

Atten. Madam!

Ulrick. Keep silence! Do not interrupt
The sacred flow of sorrow for the dead.

Countess. No; let him speak; there's matter in his looks.

Atten. The banquet, as you order'd, is prepared,
But neither bride nor bridegroom can be found.

Countess. You mean the bride cannot be found!

Atten. Nor yet
The bridegroom.

Countess. Search for him, and you will find him—
Must find him! [Attendant goes out.]

What a cross! at what a time!
When all my thoughts should be with him that's gone!
My father! I adored my father, sir:
Indeed, I did!

Ulrick. Then let me now fulfil
His last behest, whereof the substance this,
In full recorded here—which he enjoin'd
You should be instantly possess'd of—proof
Of his most fatherly regard and care.
Of those who seek your hand you must make choice
Of one to share the labours of the dukedom,
Or else abide the issue of the lists—
Your suitors summon'd to a tournament—
When he who rests the victor wins your hand.

Countess. I am content! I'll do my father's will,
And bide the issue of the tournament,
Or choose myself the man shall take my hand.

Ulrick. Jointly the Empress and myself are named
Executors, to give the will effect.

Countess. It was not needed. It had been respected
Without o'erlooking, how much less enforcement!
My brain and heart are here and there! I haven't
The use of them. Stop! [Thinks] Some one told me now
Of something—What was it?

Ulrick. One said the serf—

Countess. Call him that name again!—Whom speak'st thou of?
Huon?

Atten. [Entering.] This letter is from Huon, madam.
Mounted upon a steed, your father's gift,
He threw it me, and fled.

Countess. [Reading.] "Eternally
"Farewell—Your will is done—I use my freedom.
"Fortune my mistress hence—the richest boon
"She can award me, death!—Once more, farewell!"

O rashness most perverse and ruinous!
Let them pursue him; and provide them with
The fleetest of the stud, and gold beside,
For new relays. If they o'ertake him—if?—
They must!—'Tis an affair of life or death!
They must not quit him, but return with him—

Atten. The bride—

Countess. No heed of her. Bring Huon back.
By fair means or by foul—persuasion vain,
Let them resort to force—but not to harm
A hair of his head. So be their numbers such
As makes resistance idle. They are sure
To track him, so they lose not time—and see
They do not! If they waste a moment only,
They answer for't. Stay, sir; a purse of gold
To every one of them—of gold, you mark—

So that they bring him back ; and one for you
 In like event. A minute hence, observe,
 I look into the court-yard, and expect
 To see them in their saddles, and away !
 Upon their lives I charge them bring him back ! [*They go out.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Garden of the Castle.*

Enter SIR RUPERT and SIR CONRAD.

Sir Rup. Time is the same. 'Tis our condition's changed.
 The hours hang weary heavy on our hands,
 We scarce could catch when Catherine was here ;
 They went so fleetly by us. Then the death
 Of the Duke hath left a blank, which, while he lived,
 Light offices, with grateful tasks fill'd up,
 And kept our spirits from flagging.

Sir Con. Eventful day,
 The day he died ! Eventful day to us !
 Our Catherine married Huon then, and fled ;
 And Huon fled, avoiding Catherine ;
 Nor since of either tidings—though for him
 Almost the world was search'd. Strange, loathing him
 As she did, with hate almost unnatural,
 How much to heart the Countess took his flight.

Sir Rup. Ay, as a gentle stream would take a rock,
 Suppose one cast sudden into it,
 Damming its channel up, and making foam,
 Where all before went crystal, without ripple,
 But such as noteth gliding. Yes, 'twas strange.

Sir Con. 'Twas very strange.

Sir Rup. 'Twas one of certain things
 We see, yet question that we see, yet there
 We know they are.

Sir Con. She pines for loss of him.

Sir Rup. No, sir ; she takes to heart her father's will,
 Compelling her to choose a husband, or
 Accept of him the tournament may send her.
 And so, she keeps alone, to all forbidding
 Approach to her, except this youth, who sits
 In Huon's place, her secretary now,
 The forward cousin of fair Catherine.

Sir Con. Strange, Catherine should fly, and Huon too !
 That each should purpose, what, if known to each,
 Had one accomplish'd, had sufficed for both—
 To shun the consummation of the rites !
 Strange, that the Duke that very day should die !

Sir Rup. Untimely was the Duke's decease for us—
Prevented by his death from profiting
By the fair opening, which the turbulent
And wild Bohemians for our lances made.
We could not take the field; and, lo, the war,
Ere well commenced, is done; concluded too
By single combat, and the conqueror
A knight unknown till now, whose championship
Had graced the proudest days of chivalry:
Of presence noble as his deeds are lofty,
By that confirming what by these he won—
The favour of the Empress. Yonder comes
The secretary.

Sir Con. Ay, 'tis he.

Sir Rup. I fear

He laughs at us, giving us hopes—as still
You know he does—that one of us shall yet
Make wife of Catherine. A forward spark!
I hate a stripling that's so much the man;
It shows like aping. He grows worse and worse,
Since he hath got his office. For the sake
Of Catherine, alone, I bear with him.

Sir Con. He is like her; never brother more like sister.
I have a word to say to you anon,
Touching to-morrow, when the tournament
Decides who weds the Countess; she declining
To choose a mate herself.

Cath. [*without, very loud*]. Ho! Holloa!

Sir Rup. Ho!

CATHERINE *enters*.

Why call you, sir, so loud?

Cath. To make you hear

News, sirs, from Catherine! Shall I whisper it?
She is coming!

Sir Rup. So you told us months ago.

Cath. Well, when she comes, she'll be the welcomer!

Sir Con. I'll wait for her no longer.

Cath. Wait for her?

O! ay!—A man may wait, and wait in vain.

I wait for a wife; though the odds are ten to one,
As I'm a man, I die a bachelor.

Do you know the signs of one?

Sir Con. No; what are they?

Cath. O, various; but the chief, a cautious eye,
And calculating. He that scans a fence,
But seldom makes a clever leap of it;
Nine times in ten he balks his spring and falls,
In the ditch; while he who takes it at a glance,
Goes flying over. Women are shrewd imps!
Behoves a man he thinks not of their pockets,
When he is looking in their faces; for,

Wear he his eye ever so languishingly,
 They'll find he's only busy at a sum
 In arithmetic! Sir Rupert, let me see
 Your face! Don't look so sullen at me. Who
 Can see the sun, if he's behind a cloud?
 That's right. I would not say, but when the woman
 Kind Heaven intends for wife to you shall come,
 You'll marry her.

Sir Con. What say you of my face!

Cath. The same I say of his. By my honour, sirs!
 Though I may pass for an astrologer,
 I never yet, believe me, made pretence
 To read the stars; nor am I adept, yet,
 In palmistry; nor have I studied signs
 As lucky or unlucky omens; yet
 Things can I tell before they come to pass.

Sir Con. But shall I die a bachelor?

Cath. You will,
 Unless it chance upon a certain day,
 In a certain month, in such or such a year—
 At present which is doubtful, but as sure
 As time runs on 'twill come—you get a wife!
 Now, there's a puzzle for you; make it out,
 And tell it me; and then I'll tell it you,
 If you are in the right. Your lot is cast
 In mystery; but for Sir Rupert, his
 Is plain. 'Tis right before me! I can tell
 The year, the month, the week, the day, almost
 The very hour, he will be married, or—
 Not married! yet am I no conjurer.
 Where is Sir Otto?

Sir Con. We are going to him;
 He waits for us.

Cath. I'll follow. News wait I
 From Catherine; I'll bring it, if it comes.
 Nay, sirs, beseech you, look not thus upon me
 With eyes of marvel. On my word! indeed,
 And, by my honour,—and, if nothing else
 Will satisfy you, though I have ta'en an oath
 'Gainst swearing, I will give it on my oath—
 I am no conjurer! Another word:
 What I have told you, tell not, as you love me,
 Lest I should pay for it by flood or faggot!
 Upon my life, sirs, I am no conjurer! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Castle.*

Enter ULRICK.

Ulrick. At length the day almost arrived that brings
 The tournament, whose issue brings to her

A consort for her state—she yields me audience.
 Is it for loss of Huon she has pined,
 And kept herself forbiddingly alone?
 If so, why give his hand to Catherine?
 This is a mystery, the which the more
 I try to sound, deeper and deeper grows;
 While surmise after surmise rises, as
 Report succeeds report of high exploits
 Achieved by this unknown adventurer,
 Who now stands next the Empress, chief in place,
 That even he and Huon are the same!
 Should it be so, and he should come as well,
 What then the issue of her meeting with him?
 This I revolve, and with a troubled heart,
 That sees no end to its perplexity. [Looks off.]
 How changed she is! Her fiery eye is quench'd!
 Her head its haughty carriage hath abated,
 Her cheek is beggar'd of its prideful flush.

Enter COUNTESS [*a parchment in her hand*].

Countess. I have perused the testament, my lord,
 Carefully, word for word, and see no mention,
 Either directly or by implication,
 Touching the quality of him may win me.

Ulrick. No, none is made.—A slight omission only.

Countess. Yet space enough to let my will creep through.
 You say, my lord, you have made proclamation
 Of this fair passage, far and wide?

Ulrick. I have.

Countess. And now expect the Empress?

Ulrick. Yes.

Countess. And with her?

Ulrick. The noblest of her court; a glorious crowd;
 Among the rest her favourite; that youth
 With whose exploits the wondering realm resounds,
 Who, in so brief a space, without a name,
 Has made himself the noblest which the tongue
 Of high renown proclaims.

Countess. That youth! what youth?

Ulrick. A young adventurer, of whom it seems
 Fair fortune is enamour'd—gives him all
 He asks!

Countess. I never heard of him, before.

Ulrick. So please you, madam, you forget till now,
 Since that your father died and Huon fled,
 Save your new secretary, you have deign'd
 With none vouchsafe communing.

Countess. You are right.
 I have forgot the world, time, everything!
 What is this favourite called?

Ulrick. His titles change

So fast—the former almost new as its
Successor—scarce I know now his present style.

Countess. His name I mean?

Ulrick. His name I know not, madam.

Countess. What moves my heart, so leaden-dull before?
Why did it leap at mention of the stranger? [*Aside.*]
Has he been seen by any whom we know,
Any of our vassals, chiefs, or friends?

Ulrick. I have met
With none, that yet have seen him.

Countess [*abstractedly*]. Happy woman!

Ulrick. Madam?

Countess. The Empress is a happy woman.
She can reward desert, ennoble it.

Ulrick. So in this instance hath her highness done
With such profusion of munificence,
There are not wanting those who think she sees
Less with an empress', than a woman's eyes;
And means her bounties but as costly heralds,
Poor to the costlier comer they forerun.

Countess. What! means she to espouse him?

Ulrick. 'Tis surmised.
Matter to wonder at, yet justified.
For they report him of a presence noble,
As e'er bespoke a man to challenge honour.

Countess. I never dreamt of an abyss so hideous—
And to be standing on the very brink on't!

Ulrick. [*Alarmed at her vehemence.*] Madam!
Countess. Ay! what's the matter? [*Aside.*] I am frighten'd
At myself! [*Aloud.*] My lord, my spirits are so dreamy,
Things which are not, I see—which are, see not!
Pray do not heed me. For this tournament,
Thus near, without obstruction on my part,
Hath it approach'd; but, pray you, keep in mind
On what condition; that—at any time—
The husband it awards, revolting to me,
I am at liberty to make a choice
Between the conqueror and the cloister. So!
I'll read the will again. [*Sits down and reads.*]

Stephen. [*Entering hastily.*] News! news! my lord.

Ulrick. What is it?

Stephen. Huon!

Countess. Ha!
Well, what of Huon, is he found?

Stephen. He is.

Countess. Propitious Heaven, at what a time! Where is he?

Stephen. In the suite of the Empress.

Countess. Well?—Go on!

Stephen. I saw him! More; that sun of chivalry,
Hath blazed so suddenly forth in the brief war,
So late gone by and dazzled friends and foes—
The fav'rite of the Empress—

Countess. Well? Go on!

Stephen. Huon and he are one.

Countess. I was sure of it!

Send him away. [*She staggers to a seat, ULRICK supports her.*

Ulrick. Hence, sir.

[*STEPHEN goes out.*

Countess. Don't wonder at me! Don't!

Nor question me, whate'er I say or do!

Listen and do my bidding. I prepare

To give reception to the Empress,—thou

See Huon. Tell him I would speak with him

Soon as occasion serves; or let him *make*

Occasion, and at once—at once, my lord!

[*Aside.*] Where shall we meet? In the garden? No; the
garden

Is overlook'd. In the library? No;

We may be subject to intrusion there.

What should prevent his coming to my closet?

What place so fit? Why think of any other?

[*Aloud.*] My lord, bring Huon to my closet. Huon!

The favourite of the Empress I should say.

[*The COUNTESS and ULRICK go out severally.*

SCENE III.—SIR OTTO'S House.

Enter SIR OTTO, SIR CONRAD, *and* SIR RUPERT.

Sir Otto. 'Tis slight of fortune not to take the chance

She proffers; since the lists must open, sirs,

To every lance, why not adventure ours,

With such a prize? Wait you for Catherine.

I'm for the tournament.

Sir Con. And so am I.

This secretary is a subtle spark.

He has harp'd upon our suit to Catherine,

Awaken'd hopes, we had given o'er as dead,

And pledged himself with oaths she would return

Free, as she ne'er had plighted troth to Huon;

And, yet she comes not. What we take in earnest,

Be sure he only gives in mockery.

Sir Otto. I'm of your counsel, and shall break a lance

To-morrow for the Countess.

Sir Rup. Do so, sir.

I break no lance except for Catherine.

Catherine. [*Entering disguised as a man.*] Who talks of
breaking lances?

Sir Otto. Ha! our friend

The Secretary.

Sir Con. Well, sir, what's your news?

Where's Catherine?

Cath. Absorb'd in solving, sir,
A knotty point.
Sir Con. A knotty point ; what is't ?
Cath. The measure of a lover's patience, sir.
Sir Otto. Does she not come ?
Cath. Not till that point is solved.
Now, could you solve it for her, she might come
The sooner.
Sir Otto. 'Tis an hour.
Sir Con. A day.
Sir Otto. A week.
Sir Con. A month.
Sir Otto. A year.
Cath. [To SIR RUPERT.] Will you not make a guess ?
Sir Rup. [Sighing.] It is a life !
Cath. Can't you go further, sir ?
Try if you can. Lovers do miracles :
'Tis said they do, I never saw them, though,
Nor met with those that did.
Sir Otto. Where is our mistress ?
Cath. Here,
Where'er she is ; or nowhere, where you are.
Have you a mistress, there your mistress is,
Were she at one end of the world and you
At the other.
Sir Rup. Ay, were she in another world !
Cath. Why what's the matter with Sir Rupert ? Is
The gentleman gone mad ? I think myself
A sterling lover, but I take no oath,
Except to flesh and blood. Sir Rupert, what's
Your thought of a mistress ?
Sir Rup. A vitality
Precious, peculiar, not to be supplied ;
Once with your being join'd, a part of it
For ever !
Cath. Humph ! and you believe, Sir Rupert,
You have met with such a thing ?
Sir Rup. I have.
Cath. And where ?
Sir Rup. In Catherine.
Cath. Heaven help the man, he speaks
As if he thought himself in earnest, sirs.
Whom said he now he'd break a lance for ?
Sir Con. and Sir Otto. Her.
Cath. For Catherine ? poor man ! Far better break
A lance for the Countess ; as the lists, they say,
Are open to all challengers, that bear
The rank of knighthood.
Sir Otto. So they are, and we
Design to try our fortune, and lament
To find Sir Rupert not of the same mind.

Cath. That mortifies you, does it? So, Sir Rupert,
Will you make suit again to Catherine,
Say she comes back again, released from her
Enforcéd vow?

Sir Rup. Will I make suit to her?
My heart is ever lying at her feet.

Cath. 'Tis neighbour, then, to an ungainly shoe.
She has broken her ankle, and the awkward leech
Who set it for her made a botch of it.
Her foot's awry; she limps; her taper waist,
So straight, before, when she moved, goes, zig-zag, now.
Give your heart joy, sir, of its pleasant seat.

Sir Rup. The gait and shape of gentle Catherine
Are in her heart, no fracture—warping—there!

Sir Otto. With what a serious face you play the cheat.

Cath. Sir, I look serious at a serious thing.

Sir Con. It is not as you say?

Cath. Believe 'tis not;

But take this with you, I should be more grieved
Than you would, to disparage Catherine.

Sir Otto. So the fair Catherine halts?

Sir Con. Halts my love.

Sir Otto. And so does mine.

Cath. I have not told him all.

Sir Otto. What, is there more to come?

Cath. Listen—you'll hear.

So, sir, you make retainers of your eyes, [To SIR RUPERT.
Nor feast at the same table, but eschew
Their homely fare; though men, as noble, deem
A well-turn'd leg a dainty! Let that pass;
But give not me a mistress, with a fair
Transparent skin, that you can see, beneath,
Tracery costlier than veins of gold,
Suppose they lay in bed of alabaster.
It never stands the weather.

Sir Otto. Is she changed
In her complexion?

Cath. Do not urge me, sir,
To speak more than I would speak; speaking that
With pain.

Sir Con. What!—Has she turn'd from ivory to—

Cath. Anything that you please.

Sir Con. Mahogany?

Cath. You say it for me, I'm beholden to you;
'Tis hard to speak unwelcome things of friends.

Sir Otto. And hard to hear them too. Sir Rupert!

Sir Rup. Well?

Sir Otto. Hear ye?

Sir Rup. I do.

Sir Otto. And what resolve you?

Sir Rup. What

You heard me say before—to break no lance

Except for Catherine. Her maiden thoughts—
Sweet to the most tenacious mood of love—
And generous affections, might unveil
Themselves, without a blush, to modesty,
Are Catherine's complexion!

[Retires.]

Cath. He is mad!

Isn't he, sir? Have twenty masses said,
That you preserve your wits! seeing the thing,
That turn'd his brain for him, you all affect;
Think you 'twould bring him to his senses, sirs,
To tell him she hath squander'd all her wealth?

Sir Otto. Better she halted in her gait than that!

Sir Con. Or cast her white skin for an Ethiop's!
You do not tell us so?

Cath. I'll tell it him.

Sir Otto. But is it so?

She was a prudent girl
Before she went.

Cath. Man, sir, is but a plant,
Although he holds no rank in botany;
And, as with change of climate, plants will change,
Thrive more or less, or take no root at all;
So man discovers strange diversity,
Transferr'd to sun and soil, not native to him.

Sir Otto. But are her riches dwindled?

Sir Con. Has she shrunk,
Indeed, from affluence to poverty?

Cath. Sirs, you shall judge from one particular.
From morn till night she lives in masquerade.
You wouldn't know her, though you look'd upon her,
Walk'd with her, talk'd with her. Can this be done
At light expense? Moreover, sirs, she keeps
Bad company; nor that of her own sex;
Two arrant knaves especially, that stick
Like leeches to her, and will ne'er fall off
Long as she suffers them, while there's a drop
To gorge.

Sir Otto. She is ruin'd utterly.

Sir Con. Undone,
Beyond redemption. Look, Sir Rupert.

Sir Rup. Well?

Sir Con. Catherine's for hire; she must take service! All
Her wealth is gone!

Sir Rup. [cheerfully]. Is gone?

Sir Con. It makes you glad!

Sir Rup. Now could I woo her with the best of ye;
Her match in fortune. I could praise her now,
Dreading no charge of venal flattery.
Fair sir, take pity on an honest heart
And loving one, and as you know the haunt,
This gentle fawn hath slunk to, tell it me,
That I may trace her, straight, and make her mine.

Sir Otto. Better you wait to-morrow's tournament,
As we shall!

Cath. Gentlemen, you do not know
Your man! Tell me a linsey-woolsey maid,
With halting gait, and saffron-colour'd skin,
And not a doit to make a market with them,
Could for a moment, in comparison,
Stand with the Countess! Who could credit it?
The simple truth is this, your friend lacks mettle.

Sir Rup. Sir!

Cath. He can bluster, that is evident.
See what a giant!—He would eat me up
If he could! but think you, sirs, I heed his club?
Give me a straw, I'll face him. You mistake
Your friend! his frame's robust enough, but, sooth,
His spirit is a lank one.

Sir Rup. 'Sdeath, sir!

Cath. Ho!

If you have sworn men into agues, sir,
Don't try your skill on me! My parrot swears
As well as you, and just as much I heed her.

Sir Rup. [*Drawing.*] This passes all endurance—pshaw, a
stripling! [*Returning his sword.*]

Cath. A stripling, sir, to make an oak afraid.

Sir Rup. [*Again drawing.*] Indeed!

Cath. As I live, his sword is out again!

But he's a spaniel, as I'll prove to you,
Who thinks he bites by showing you his teeth.
Here's for you, sir—[*Draws*—but hold, what day is this?

Sir Con. Friday.

Cath. I never fight on Fridays, sirs.
My killing days are all the rest of the week,
E'en Sundays not excepted. Sirs, your friend
Is a coward. [*Coolly puts up her sword.*]

Sir Rup. Furies!

Cath. Fiends and all sorts of imps!
Swearing won't save you, sir. I'll prove my words.
I dare you, at the tournament to-morrow,
To break a lance with me. Observe you, sirs,
At the thought of it, he shakes, from head to foot,
And thinks to pass it off with swaggering.
He dares as soon confront stout Charlemagne,
Were he alive, as me. I'll wager you
My sword to your dagger, he takes flight to-day,
And waits not for to-morrow.

Sir Rup. Will I not!

I will have satisfaction. I accept
His challenge. I will have satisfaction, sirs.

Cath. You shall, and have it to your heart's content!
Take linsey-woolsey with a halt, and the skin
Of a negro, rather than essay a tilt
With chance to win a Countess! I could laugh

To scorn the man that would believe him. Oh!
 He shall have satisfaction. I could beat him
 With a rush, in rest. He shall have satisfaction!
 Sirs, he will cower at very sight of me;
 Fall on his knees, and beg his life of me,
 With clasp'd hands. He shall have satisfaction!
[They go out severally.]

SCENE IV.—*A Room in the Castle.*

Enter COUNTESS.

Count. All is confirm'd—Each gives the same account
 His mistress sees her mate. Of all her court
 He is the only one, whose duties to her
 She takes as favours, not as things of course.
 He comes! Who stops him thus untimely? Oh,
 How changed he is!—The fiery hardihood
 Of the life he hath of late made consort of,
 Has given another spirit to his eyes.
 His face is cast anew, as circumstance
 Could alter Nature's modelling and work,
 Improving, on her mould. Is that the man,
 Was, once, my father's serf? whom once I scorn'd?
 Fell ever at my wayward frown that brow?
 Or stoop'd that knee, for me, to kiss the ground?
 Would it do it now? Fell ever at my feet
 That form, as prostrate as the hand of death
 Had struck it to the floor? 'Twould take that hand
 To lay it, now, there—and a wave of mine
 Had done it, once! If he confesses hold
 Of any other, never shall he learn
 His hold of me! If he bears me love,
 I bless my stars I have the 'vantage-ground.

*HUON enters, and remains standing at a distance, with his eyes
 on the ground.*

Countess. Is Huon here, and does not Huon speak? *[Pauses.]*
 Absent so long, no greeting for a friend— *[Pauses.]*
 A woman, too! *[Pauses]*—No salutation, kind,
 Prelude of happy news she'd joy to hear,—
 Relation of adventures she would thrill
 To listen to,—exploits she would wonder at,
 And the next moment at her wonder blush,
 Knowing whose arm achieved them!

Huon. I am glad
 To find you well.

Countess. You are glad to find me well?
 I hope you are! It were not saying much,
 I trust, to say I *know* you are! You are glad
 To find me well! Is that your news?

If 'tis, 'tis very strange.

Huon. You wish'd to see me,
And I am here to learn your will.

Countess. More news!

You are a friend worth parting with, you bring
Such marvels home with you. Some time methinks
Since last we met together, and *you are glad*
To find me well; and, *as I wish'd to see you,*
You are here to learn my will! You were not here, then,
Had not I sent for you.

Huon. It would have been
Presumptuous.

Countess. Presumptuous!

Huon. Yes, madam,
In the serf.

Countess. [*With sudden indignation.*] No, sir, not in the
favourite

Of the Empress!—*Huon*, this is not the way
We ought to meet! It should not be in anger!
You are come home, and you are welcome home.
Requires my tongue a backer to get credence?
Well! there's my hand beside. Do you not take
My hand?

Huon. You are a noble lady, madam,
Whose father was my lord, by leave of whom,
I thought and had a will—did what I did—
Yea, kept the very blood within my veins.
Behoves it I should take his daughter's hand?

Countess. You mock me!

Huon. Would I did, and 'twere a dream!
But dreams are not repeated, day by day,
And day by day reminds me of a time
I was your father's serf.

Countess. No more of this.

Huon. Oh! would no more! The wounded body heals,
The pain is over, all is sound again,
A scar reminds you of it—nothing more!
Not so the heart, you lacerate it once!
Habit may dull, pursuit engross—divert—
But never are you ransom'd from the throe!
Live your meridian out, it comes again,
Fresh as at first, to make you writhe anew.

Countess. We do not meet to talk of grievances,

Huon. I offer'd you my hand just now.
Why do you weep? I did not give it you
To kiss it with your tears!

Huon. O, 'tis a hand
Thou hast forbidden mine to meet.

Countess. No, *Huon*,
Not as a friend's!—[*Recovering herself.*]—I'll see him clearly
first— [Aside.]

Sit down and let us talk. I have fifty things

I want to say to you, yet know not which
To begin with. Huon, do you like the Empress?

Huon. Like her?

Countess. Yes; like her,—that's the word I said.
Perhaps it should be "love her?"

Huon. Love her, madam!—

Countess. [*Interrupting him.*] I see you do! Go on? What
were you going

To say?

Huon. O contrast marvellous! beyond
Belief of nature!

Countess. Ay! 'twixt her and me!
Go on! The contrast? Best we understand
Each other! Well? The contrast?

Huon. 'Twere as one
Should find the sun by following the night!
Should plunge into her regions, and for chill,
And gloom, and sterileness, find light, and warmth,
And verdure,—such as should belong to day!
'Twere as death own'd a heart, and life had none
But with the shows of animation
Harbour'd, within its breast, a core of stone,
While the still ribs of death held throbs beneath them!

Countess. Am I that day, that life, compared to which
Death, night, are e'en so rich? Is she thou servest
That death, that night, preferr'd to life and day?

Huon. O, I *did* love thee to oblivion
Of myself! What Nature gave me, to assert
The man, neglecting, as despised things
Compared to thee! That she intended me
For deeds of nobleness, I may confess,
Seeing that others own I have achieved them;
Yet I abused her bounties,—and, for what?
Scorns—wrongs—through love of thee, preferr'd them!
And which I bore, until the cause itself,
That made me bear them, thou wouldst make a means
Of yet unknown oppression. *That* I bore!
But, patience there gave up! Yes!—Not, until
Coercéd there—where, spared, I were content
To last the thrall of passion's lethargy—
Did I rebel! But when I was struck down
Prostrate, as, for the sake of flesh and blood,
Behoves not slave to lie,—with marvel on't
I waked to the sense of what I ought to be!
Of what, against my will, 'twas past the sport
Of power to change me from! A MAN!—and straight
A man I started up! a man, resolved
To use his attributes as fits a man;
To vindicate the ancient, common birth-right,
And answer the design of Him that framed him!

Countess. So! You have *register'd* your debts to me,
No item overlook'd thou knowest of.

What, now, if I could name to thee one debt
 Would blot out all the rest?—*not* known to thee;
 A debt thy fairest dreams ne'er gave thee glimpse of,
 Howe'er they buoy'd thee up; when, cast away
 The clog that day put on, thou soar'dst as high
 As e'er ambition left at large could wing,
 Daring the eagle himself to follow thee!

Huon. No debt that thou couldst name were gain to me.
 I keep no register of aught between us.
 Or, if I do, I never turn'd to it,
 Unless enforced, as now. Whate'er has pass'd,
 Is pass'd, and, profitless to memory,
 Were better be forgotten.

Countess. Ay? Indeed!
 So easily done? Well, be it so! 'Tis past,
 And, so, should be forgotten. Please you now
 Turn to the Empress. You have painted me;
 Proceed to her. Come, let me see what hand
 You will make of her picture. When I ask'd you now
 If you liked her, you but echo'd me!—and then
 I ask'd you if you loved her, and again
 You echo'd me! I want an answer, not
 An echo! Well, sir? well?

Huon. Madam, I love
 And honour her. [*She starts from her seat; he rises also.*]

Countess. Thou art rewarded, pride!—
 Meet'st thy deserts! Show thy high breeding now!
 Tread stately! throw thy spurning glances round!
 And talk as mighty things as though the earth
 Were made for thee alone! Where's thy domain?
 Gone! And thy palace, what is it? a ruin!
 And what art thou thyself? a beggar now!
Huon, you loved me once! [*Bursting into tears.*]

Huon. I loved thee once!
 Oh, tell me, when it was I loved thee not?
 Was't in my childhood, boyhood, manhood? Oh!
 In all of them I loved thee? And were I now
 To live the span of my past life, twice told,
 And then to wither, thou surviving me,
 And yet I lived in thy sweet memory,
 Then mightst thou say of me, "He loved me once;
 But that was all his life!"

Countess. 'Twas heart for heart!
 I loved thee ever! Yes! the love that now
 Thrills on the woman's tongue; the girl's had told thee,
 Had I been bold as fond; for, even then,
 I saw thy worth; but did not see thy station,
 Till others, not so well affected towards thee,
 Reveal'd it to me by their cold regards.
 I could not help my nature. From that time
 Two passions strove in my divided soul
 For mastery—scorn of thy station—love

For thee—each feeding on the other's hate,
 And growing stronger, till I thought their strife
 Would shake my frame to dissolution! Yes!
 O, Huon! when my brow sat cloudy, oft,
 O'er my cold eye, that look'd askant at thee,
 Thou little thought'st what friend there was within
 Would make that brow clear as a summer sky,
 That eye bright, glowing as a summer's sun,
 To kindle thee—as they, their world, with life,
 And health, and wealth, and gladness!

Huon. Say'st thou this
 To me? or do I dream I hear thee say it?
 Or is the past a dream? I did not yield
 At thy command, to marry Catherine?
 Thou didst not see me wed her? Fancy forged
 The ring I thought I put upon her finger?
 Thou wast not by at all? From first to last,
 Hadst not a hand in it? or, if thou hadst,
 Why, then, untimely this unfold to me?
 For well I know thee to be prime of all
 Proud honour's children! Art thou offspring prime
 Of cruelty as well? O, Heaven, to think
 She loved me, and could give me to another,
 Nor yet to her alone!—another!—

Countess. Ha! Well?

Huon. One who ne'er set eyes on me, until
 An outcast, by *her* deed of hate, who loved me!
 Saw me, a stranger, hunting after fortune,
 And gave her hand to me could help me up!
 Lavish'd her favours on me!—decorates
 With honours, till beside the bright themselves
 I lost no brightness!

Countess. To the Empress?

Huon. Yes!

Thou lovest me?—O, fate! There was a time,
 'Twere more than bliss, if more could be, to know it;
 But now 'tis misery!

Countess. 'Tis misery!

[*COUNTRESS starts up again; HUON also rising.*]

Art thou in such a strait indeed as that,
 To give my love for thee so harsh a name?
 What shall I call it then? Coin me a name
 Will stand for something worse than misery—
 Will paint the case of a high, noble maid,
 Who stoop'd to love a serf; nay, stopp'd not there,
 But told her passion to him—Misery!

Huon. I am no more a serf.

Countess. Thou art ennobled;
 Yet art thou still the same; thou hast won honours,
 Rewards of deeds, in spite of thy base blood
 Achieved by thee!

Huon. Nay, madam, spare my blood,

And pardon me, its owner, if I say
It is not base.

Countess. It is!—What should it be
But base? A serf gave it to thee, a serf
Gave him his blood! Trace back the current, sir,
Far as you can, and you will find it base,
Nothing but base!

Huon. Madam, men's natures are
Their blood; they have no other—high or low.
If base the current hitherto of mine,
It ceased with me. Born in thy father's house
A serf, I left it one, to seek my fortune,
Make it or mar it, for promotion having
No other patron than my own right arm,
And my own heart and head to guide and nerve it;
And with their help, I see that house again,
An independent, self-exalted man,
While many a son, who left a noble home
With blood untainted for a thousand years,
Returns to it no better than he left it.
Is my blood base?

Countess. No, Huon! mine was base
To let me call it so. Alas! alas!
And hast no better welcome for my love
Than that sad word thou spok'st?

Huon. What word so fit?
What is it to a man condemn'd to die,
To tell him of a treasure left to him?
Shall he be glad and thank his lucky stars,
Or shall not that, their bounty, aggravate
The ruin, makes it vain!

Countess. Condemn'd to die?
Resemblest thou a man condemn'd to die?

Huon. Why didst thou drive me from thee by that act?

Countess. That act was nothing; 'twas thy flight,
And that which follow'd it. Thou art entangled—
And thank thy flight. Oh! Huon, were thy love
In daring enterprise the tithe of mine,
'Twould attempt something to enlarge thee from
The cause thou art prisoner to!

Huon. It cannot cease,
Except with life.

Countess. The Empress loves thee, Huon!

Huon. No.

Countess. But she does.
Thou art her favourite. She
Hath chain'd thee to her throne.

Huon. No.

Countess. But she has!
Thou hast made merchandise,
Most shameful merchandise, of thy allegiance!

Broken oaths as tiny shells, which at a touch,
Will fall to powder!

Huon. Broken oaths!

Countess. Yes, oaths!

Thy life was all one oath of love to me!
Sworn to me daily, hourly, by thine eyes,
Which, when they saw me, lighten'd up, as though
An angel's presence had enhanced their vision,
That I have seen their very colour change,
Subliming into hues past earthliness.

Talk of the adjuration of the tongue—

Compare love's name, a sound which any lip
May pipe! a breath!—with holy love itself!

Thou'rt not forsworn, because thou took'st no oath?

What were thy accents then? thy accents, Huon?

Language that turn'd thy lightest words to oaths,

Vouching the burden of a love-fraught soul!

Telling a tale which my young nature caught

With interest so deep, 'twas conn'd by heart

Before I knew the fatal argument!

Huon, I charge thee quit the service of

The Empress!

Huon. 'Twere against all honour.

Countess. No!

Give up her service!

Huon. 'Twere ingratitude.

Countess. Ingratitude for what!

Huon. She has advanced me

Past my deserts.

Countess. No, I deny it! No!

Not equal to them! No! Thy golden deeds

She has repaid with tinsel!

Ulrick. [*Entering.*] Please you, sir,
The Empress summons you.

Countess. You are not going?

Huon. My presence is commanded.

Countess. Are you going?

Ulrick. My lord!

Huon. I come.

Countess. You are going, then?

Huon. I must go.

Countess. You must? Then go! Go, and farewell for ever!

[*They go out.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Hall of the Castle.*

The EMPRESS, Courtiers, Knights, Herald, &c., prepared to proceed to the Tournament.

Enter ULRICK.

Emp. [*To ULRICK.*] Why wait we for the Countess? What delays her?

This day is dedicate to her; for her
We are convened; and comes she last of all?

Ulrick. Madam, she craves your favour for this pause.
Believe 'tis not remissness, but mischance,
Retards her. Doubtless she will come, anon.

Emp. Anon, my lord! Anon is not our time
For friends to greet us, when they summon us.

[*Enter three Attendants, the first bearing a coronet on a cushion, the second a pile of parchments, the third followed by Vassals, carrying money-coffers; last of all, the COUNTESS, plainly attired, followed by her Women, in costly dresses. She stops before the EMPRESS.*]

Emp. Why, lady! what is this?

Countess. My liege, receive
This emblem of that pomp which I resign,
Because 'tis adjunct to conditions, such
As render it a burden to me, past
The faculty of sufferance to bear.

Emp. Lady!

Countess. So please you, madam, give me leave,
As joint executor with this worthy lord,
Into your hands I also yield all right
And title to this fair château, besides
The lands and forests, its appendages,
As well as vassals, natives of the soil.

Emp. But, lady—

Countess. Madam, suffer me conclude.
These are the coffers which my father left,
And, as he left them, render'd to your highness;
And with them all resign'd, save such endowment
As shall entitle me to that retreat,
Holy and calm, wherein I mean to pass,
I'll say, the remnant of my days, i' th' hope,
Though few are past, still fewer are to come—
Which option, as you know, my father's will
Has left to me.

Emp. Then will you not abide
The cast of fate in the tournament? nor take
The husband she may send—nor yet select
Yourself?

Countess. I cannot, madam.

Emp. How?

Countess. I am
Forestall'd.

Emp. By whom?

Countess. By you!

Emp. Let every one
Repair to the tournament. Let it proceed,
As we ourself were there. And you, my lord, [*To ULRICK.*
Preside for us. It is our will the lists
Be open'd straight. The Countess stays with me.

[*All go out, except the EMPRESS and COUNTESS.*
We are alone! Now, how am I a let
To such espousals as your choice would make?

Countess. Do you not know?

Emp. Girl, be direct with me;
Nor in the headlong passion of your soul,
That seems to joy in strife and wrack, forget
'Tis your liege lady that vouchsafes you audience!

Countess. That I forget, and everything beside,
Except one thing, in still revolving which,
The earth hath shrunk in estimation
Into a grain—the sun into a spark!
Nought hath kept substance but my desolation,
Which seems to me to fill up space, itself,
Till nothing else hath room.

Emp. Thy desolation? Who made it for thee?

Countess. Thou!

Emp. In what regard?

Countess. In thy attractive favour shown to Huon!

Emp. I made thy desolation? Thou thyself
Didst make it with thy pride, the greater, but
Worse portion of thee!

Countess. By my pride?

Emp. Thy pride!
Which, evil counsellor to thy love, advised it
To blush with shame at homage, from the which
It could not yet refrain, because 'twas due—
Tribute to such desert, as far behind
Left all desert beside, and might have won
The subject's heart—whose mistress's it won!—
Thy story—everything are known to me.

Countess. Then thou confessest it!

Emp. What?

Countess. What?

Emp. Beware!

I brook not such a tone from thee.

Countess. The heart
Will speak, despite the checks of shows and forms,
Shadows compared to its realities!
Is it not so with thee?—e'er hast thou felt
A pang?—and if thou hast, where, then, thy palace?

Thy retinue?—thy guards?—thy empire?—Gone,
 With all their proud appurtenances, and
 No habitation left thee, but thy breast,
 The only house of happiness or woe!
 How shall it be with me then, with a heart,
 Madden'd with torture? Shall I cast about
 To furnish looks, and words, and tones for things,
 I have no interest in, and thou, that hast,
 In equal case wouldst give to disregard?

Emp. Remember thou'rt a subject!

Countess. So I will

While thou'rt the empress; but when thou becomest
 A woman—a mere woman like myself—
 Stepp'st from the eminence that lifts thee 'bove me—
 Levell'st thee to me in one common nature—
 I deal with thee as woman deals with woman!
 I own thy power! I must and do! Thy breath
 Can doom me exile, bondage, what it will!
 There I submit! Thou art the empress there.
 But when thou thwart'st me in the interests
 Which are the right, not more of one than all—
 Trenchest upon my private peace—my love—
 Thou dost me wrong for which I challenge thee,
 As equal may an equal.

Emp. Come! Thy challenge?
 What dost allege against me?

Countess. That thou lov'st him!

Emp. Ay, by my troth, as much as thou didst scorn him!

Countess. Was't he accused me to thee?

Emp. Wayward woman,
 He never spoke of thee except with love.

Countess. How couldst thou love him then? How could
 thy greatness
 Forget itself to try and steal a heart,
 Thou knew'st to be another's?

Emp. Steal!

Countess. Ay, steal!
 Must we coin terms for those that are above us,
 To make offences gracious to their ears,
 When they commit them—which, by us enacted,
 They would blast with damning names!

Emp. Thou hast a spirit!

Countess. Thou knew'st he loved me, and didst covet
 him!

Covet a heart at second-hand—an empress!
 Hear me that am a subject, and thy subject—
 His heart was mine, until thou robb'dst me of it—
 Not of it all, but of a part—though if
 A part be gone, go all!—Well, as I said,
 His heart was mine at first. 'Tis gone—My peace,
 Hopes, everything, along with it! What then?
 Would I have it back?—No!—I would sooner die!

Its worth was its fidelity—That lost,
All's lost. Thou covetedst a faithless heart!

Emp. Didst thou deserve that heart?

Countess. [*Weeping.*] I did!—I loved him
Better than thou couldst do!

Emp. I' faith, thou'rt brave!
Thy love of him was persecution.

Countess. [*Weeping.*] Yet
I loved him!

Emp. Loved him! It was tyranny,
Enforced without the mercy of a pause.

Countess. [*Weeping still, and more bitterly.*] The more I
loved him!

Emp. Loved him!—and constrained him
To nuptials he abhorr'd.

Countess. I did—and then [*In an agony of tears.*]
I loved him most!

Emp. How had it fared with him,
Hadst thou been I?

Countess. Far differently.

Emp. How?

Countess. I then had been above rebuke or blame!
I would have given his merits their fair field,
Encouraged them to challenge their deserts,
Rewarded them till they had lifted him
So near equality to me, the seat
I fill'd, he might have shared along with me.

Emp. That field he found himself, without my aid!
I saw him there, and challenged simple greatness,
In spite of its disguise; desired it doff
Its lowly suit and show the thing it was;
Nor stopp'd till, step by step, I saw it climb
To where it stands; nor mean I to stop there!

Countess. How?

Emp. I design him for the highest grace
I can bestow.

Countess. The highest!

Emp. Yes, beyond
His hopes, until to-day—Until to-day,
Never divulged to him.

Countess. He knows it, then?

Emp. He does; and, till my promise is fulfill'd,
With fears that shake him, spite of certainty
Of his immeasurable happiness—
For such he thinks it—wears a doubtful life.

Countess. Thy hand!

Emp. The hand of her, more proud to be
The empress of his heart than of my realm.

Countess. He shall not take it!

Emp. Not?

Countess. Thy power is huge,
But there are bounds to it!

Emp. What bounds?

Countess. Right!—Law!—

Imperial foot stops there.—It dares not cross,
And if it dares, it shall not!

Emp. Sooth, thou'rt brave!

Countess. He shall not marry!

Emp. No?

Countess. No!

Emp. She's a rock!

She echoes me!

Countess. He shall not marry!

Emp. What!

Again?

Countess. Wast thou the empress of the world,
I'd say to thee again—He shall not marry!

Emp. Thou know'st a let?

Countess. I do!

Emp. The troth he pledged

To Catherine—you see I am advised
Of all! The marriage is annull'd.

Countess. It is?

Emp. It is!

Countess. How?

Emp. By the Church!

Countess. The Church? And yet
He shall not marry!

Emp. What! Not marry thee?

Countess. [*Changing, and falling on her knees.*] Madam!

Emp. The hand that I design for him—

Crown of my favour, his deserts—is thine,
Not mine, my girl—the guerdon fair for which
He would not take my empire in exchange—
Ay, with my hand, to boot!

Countess. My liege, my empress!

Emp. My fiery queen, and have I tamed you now?
Tamed you, so soon! I half repent me on't.

Mine's the true spirit, namesake! It admires
To see itself in others. 'Faith, my glass
Never reflected me more honestly

Than thou didst, even now. Listen to me.

I am thy Huon's friend, and nothing more.

Rise! Now we'll talk as sister does with sister.

Hither thy Huon bears me company—

Unwarn'd to what intent, until to-day.

Until to-day, in darkness that the bar

The Church, with thy fair aid, 'twixt him and thee

Had set—the Church, at my persisting suit,

Has quite annull'd; and now he's in the lists

Striving to win thee! He that never yet,

In strait of life or death, much less a tilt,

Suffer'd defeat! [*Trumpets.*]—That flourish is the close.

Smile at it, girl! It makes thee Huon's wife!

Huon—no more the serf—but nobleman—
Nor nobleman alone! This hour a prince,
For thy fair sake!

Countess [*dejectedly to herself*]. Would he were still the
serf.

Emp. Dejected, girl!

Countess. Madam.

Emp. They come! Come hither!

Here take thy seat in the centre. Here thou art chief.

We are but second! Smile—Thy Huon comes!

[*Music.* ULRICK and the rest re-enter from the
Tournament. The EMPRESS anxiously surveys them.
The COUNTESS absent and dejected.

Where is he?

Countess. Madam?

Emp. Which is Huon?

[*Aside to COUNTESS.*

Countess. Which?

Emp. [*Aside to COUNTESS.*] Methinks he is not here. Canst
make him out?

Girl, tell me, is thy lover here or not?

He seems not here, and yet he must be here.

Herald. Madam, the lists are closed. The victor waits
The prize which he has won. Shall he receive it?

Emp. [*Aside to COUNTESS.*] Shall I say yes? I must say
yes. Thou smilest.

I will say yes!—He shall receive the prize.

[*Aloud.*

Who is he that bows?

Herald. The victor, madam.

Emp. [*To COUNTESS.*] Ha!

Do you know him?

Countess. Not with his visor; yet
Methinks I ought to know him, were it he.

Emp. Sir Knight, so please you, raise your visor. 'Tis
The prince of Milan! Girl—what means thine eye
To blaze with joy? It looks on thy despair!
The prince of Milan 'tis that wins thy hand!
Hear'st thou me? Know'st thou what I say?

Countess. I do!

Both hear and comprehend thee.

Emp. Ay, and smile?

Countess. And smile.

Emp. Art thou thyself? Am I myself?
I think myself the same! Where is Huon?

Ulrick. Gone

To take his armour off.

Emp. How fared it with him?

Ulrick. He enter'd first the lists, and one by one
O'erthrew all comers, till the prince of Milan
Unhorsed him.

Countess. Is he hurt?

Ulrick. No, madam.

Countess. [*Starting up.*] Thanks!
My Lord, bring Huon hither! Hither! Hie!
Now all is as it should be.

Emp. Should be, girl?
Say rather should not be. Thy lover's foil'd.
Where is the ashy cheek, that meets disaster,
The brow that's like the wrack? the gusty breath?
The quivering bloodless lip and quaking frame?
These should be, and they are not! Where are they?
Or rather, wherefore see I in their stead
Things 'twould become to wait on holidays
Rather than days of penance? Look not thus,
Else thou wilt make me hate thee!

Countess. Madam, madam,
I tell thee, and believe me, all is well.

Emp. [*Indignantly.*] Then let the prince of Milan take his prize.

Fred. I claim it on my knee!

[*At the moment the Prince kneels, HUON led by ULRICK enters, and the COUNTESS rushes towards him.*]

Countess. How is it, Huon?
Thou look'st as hurt.

Huon. Sped in the spirit, lady.
Forgetful of my charger, all unmindful,
He lack'd my argument to hearten him,
Bent on the most surpassing prize alone,
I did not think to change him, and he fail'd me!

Countess. Fortune, farewell! and pride go with thee! Go!
Welcome adversity! Shake hands with me,
Thou tester of true hearts! whose homely fare
No flatterer sits down to—hollow friend—
Foe, masking thoughts of scorn with smiling face;—
But truth and honesty! affection stanch!
That grasps the hand before it scans the sleeve,
And greets the lowly portal with a grace
More winning far than his, who thanks the gate
That spreads with pride, to let a monarch in.

Emp. Girl, I am loath to speak in terms of blame,
But thou hast much offended courtesy:
Not only slighting me, thy sov'reign lady,
But him to whom thy fate awards thee bride.

Countess. A wife must be a widow, ere a bride.

Emp. A wife?—No wife art thou!

Countess. I am a wife!
Before this goodly presence I proclaim it.
A wife by stealth, but still a wedded wife!
Wedded for love, as fervent, durable,
As ever led a woman to the altar!

Emp. Where is thy husband? Hear'st thou—where is he?

Countess. Where my remorse, contrition, deprecation,
Homage, and love, now throw me! I am kneeling
At his feet!

[*Kneels to HUON*]

Huon. Thy husband, I ?

Countess. My husband, thou !

Huon. Was I not wed to Catherine ?

Countess. Thou wast.

My name is Catherine, as thou shouldst know,
But, as thou knewest not, till now ; the lips
Pronounced that name in wedding thee—the hand
Then given to thee—the troth then plighted thee—
Were mine as truly as the breath that now
Avows I am thy wife !—in debt to fate
For baffling thee ; for now she owns thee lord
In thy adversity !

Huon. Thou kneel'st to me !
In marvel of thy words !—I overlook'd thee,
Madam !—My wife, rise—pray you, rise !—my own,
My dear liege lady ever ! I am feeble
In words ; but oh ! the strife is strong, within,
Of wonder, gratitude, humility,
Pride, honour, love, outdoing one another !

Enter CATHERINE, disguised.

Cath. Fair Empress, justice ! justice !

Emp. What comes now ?

Who asks for justice ?

Cath. One that is most wrong'd
In his honour ; cheated by a craven knight,
Who promised him to give him meeting here ;
But hath broken his word—no doubt, through cowardice.

Emp. What is his name ?

Cath. Sir Rupert.

Sir Rup. [*Stepping forward.*] He speaks false !
I am here to my appointment.

Cath. Are you so ?

Have you not sprain'd your arm ?

Sir Rup. No !

Cath. Nor your leg ?

Sir Rup. No !

Cath. Nor your side, that you can't sit your horse ?

Sir Rup. No !

Cath. Wonderful ! Your spirit does not fail ?

Sir Rup. No !

Cath. Yet more wonderful, you'll fight me ?

Sir Rup. Yes !

Cath. You shall, but where I pray you are your friends ?

Sir Otto and Sir Conrad. [*Coming forward.*] Here !

Cath. Gentlemen, I am sorry for the fall
You got in tilting for the Countess ; but
'Tis nothing to the one which he shall rue,
As you shall see. Down on your knees and beg
Your life.

Sir Rup. And beg my life !

Cath. Now what's the use

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Of pondering, on that which must be done?
 Do I not know, sir, that you have borne cuffs
 A thousand times, as well you know you have,
 And know you not, a bold face never yet
 Made a bold heart? Down on your knees at once!
 Valour won't come for stamping, sir! Entreat
 Your friends to hold you; that's a better way
 To pass for a brave man.

Sir Rup. I'll smite thee.

Cath. Do!

If you dare!

[*Throwing off cloak.*]

Ha! Have I brought you to thy knee at last, sir?

Said I not truly, that I would bring you there?

Beware I say not I shall keep you there!

Sir Rup. What! Catherine?

Countess. Yes, Catherine, Sir Rupert.

Sir Rup. O happiness!

Countess. Which thou hast well deserved.

Sir Rup. Thou still wast gracious to me.

Countess. For thy truth,

Attested by thy jealous poverty.

I saw thy honest love for Catherine,

In secret cherish'd, as thou thought'st—as one

Conceals a costly treasure he has found,

And rightfully may keep, but, being poor,

Fear to display it, through the world's charity.

'Thy Catherine, whom before thou fear'dst to woo,

Now dares make suit to thee, and challenges thee,

To make her thine. So, take her, if thou wilt,

And with her honour, for thy honest love!

Cath. O—

Countess. Huon, my husband—Lord! canst thou forgive

The scornful maid, for the devoted wife,

Had cleaved to thee, though ne'er she *own'd* thee lord?

Huon. I nothing see, except thy wondrous love.

Countess. Madam, our happiness lifts up to thee

Its eyes in penitence and gratitude!

Thou, chief in station, first to give desert,

Despite its lowliness, its lofty due!

O, thou hast taught a lesson to all greatness,

Whether of rank or wealth, that 'tis the roof

Stately and broad which ne'er was meant to house

Equality alone—whose porch is never

So proud, as when it welcomes-in desert,

That comes in its own fair simplicity.

END OF LOVE.

JOHN OF PROCIDA;

OR,

The Bridals of Messina.

A TRAGEDY.—IN FIVE ACTS.

TO CAPTAIN CHARLES H. TOWNLEY, R.N.

4, GREAT GEORGE'S SQUARE, LIVERPOOL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have the greatest pride and pleasure in now redeeming an old promise—that of dedicating A PLAY of mine to you.

Whether as a gallant naval officer, an accomplished seaman, or an amiable private citizen, I do not know the man who ought to supersede you in receiving this humble heart-tribute from your affectionate and grateful servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

29, ALFRED PLACE, BEDFORD SQUARE.

September, 1840.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1840.)

SICILIANS.

<i>Procidu</i>	Mr. MOORE.
<i>Fernando</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Guiscardo</i>	Mr. COOPER.
<i>Martini</i>	Mr. W. H. PAYNE.
<i>Andrea</i>	Mr. HEMMING.
<i>Carlo</i>	Mr. BINGE.
<i>Stephano</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Thomaso</i>	Mr. COLLETT.
<i>Francisco</i>	Mr. MORELLI.

FRENCH.

<i>Governor</i>	Mr. DIDDEAR.
<i>Martel</i>	Mr. BRINDAL.
<i>Louis</i>	Mr. FITZJAMES.
<i>Ambrose</i>	Mr. BLAND.
<i>Le Clerc</i>	Mr. WIGAN.
<i>François</i>	Mr. HONNER.
<i>Pierre</i>	Mr. CONNELL.
<i>Anthonio</i>	Mr. S. SMITH.
<i>Eugene</i>	Mr. THOMPSON.
<i>Isoline</i>	Miss E. TREE.
<i>Marguerite</i>	Miss FITZJAMES.

JOHN OF PROCIDA;

OR,

The Bridals of Messina.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Pass in the Mountains near Messina.*

Enter GUISCARDO and STEPHANO.

Guis. His words were fire—both light and heat! At once
With zeal, they warm'd us; and convinced, with reason.
I had read and heard of eloquence before;
How 'tis despotic, takes the heart by storm—
Whate'er the ramparts, prejudice, or use
Environ it withal—how, 'fore its march,
Stony resolves have given way like flax,
How it can raise, or lay, the mighty surge
Of popular commotion, as the wind,
The wave that frets the sea;—but till to-day,
I never proved its power. When he began,
A thousand hearers prick'd their ears to list,
With each a different heart; when he left off,
Each man could tell his neighbour's by his own.

Steph. Is't John of Procida?

Guis. So rumour says.

Who else? The constant'st friend of Sicily—
The friend that loves, yet suffers for his love.
Heard'st ever lips before, with power like his?
A holy man, and brigand, near me stood,
Wedged by the press together; churlishly
They first endured their compell'd neighbourhood,
And shrank from contact, they would fain escape.
The one with terror; and with scorn, the other,
Who blazed with life and passion, like a torch
Beside a taper;—such the man of prayer
Appear'd, in contrast with the freebooter.
But lo! the change! soon as the orator
That universal chord, with master skill,
Essay'd—the love of country—Like two springs,
Ravines apart, whose waters blend at last
In some sweet valley; leaning cheek to cheek,

Attracted by resistless sympathy,
 Their tears together ran, one goodly river !
 Hark ! the dispersing crowd, taking their leave
 From the last hill-tops. Let us join them. [They cheer.

Steph. Hither

Come Andrea and John of Procida.
 Let's on, my friend, nor interrupt their converse,
 For it seems deep, and earnest.

Guis. Have with you.

I would Fernando had been here, that friend
 I scarce can boast, yet can't refrain from loving.
 If there be latent virtue in his blood,
 Like what endears the land that gives us birth,
 Such heart enforcement sure had call'd it forth ! [They go out.

Enter PROCIDA, disguised as a Cordelier, and ANDREA.

And. You move my wonder, past the speaking on't.
 I never dream'd, in such extremity,
 Such hope could be so near !

Pro. 'Tis in the crisis
 The fever does or dies. Our friends abroad
 Are warm, and not a few ; the fleet, you see
 In the offing, and suppose the Pope's, is ours ;
 At home, Sicilians are as one single man,
 Their thoughts, their feelings, their resolves, the same.
 In this disguise, each quarter of the isle
 Where man hath habitation, house, or cave,
 I have visited ; and tuned the minds of all
 To the same temper and the selfsame aim,
 Vengeance and liberty ! Before a week
 The hordes of France shall dwindle to the man
 Whose execution ends them.

And. Retribution
 Indeed !

Pro. Yes ; sweeping and definitive.
 Thou seem'st to lower at it. Hast any part
 In France ? Dost owe her kindliness or ruth ?—
 The tyranny that Sicily weeps, daily,
 With blood !—her children's scourge, as testify
 Murder and rapine, that unblushingly
 Enact their parts in open day, and lust,
 With quite as little shame ! I know that men
 Will turn to tigers in a storm'd town
 That's yielded them to sack ; but Syracuse,
 Palermo, and Messina, stood no siege ;
 And yet were they sack'd, and still the game goes on,
 And in cold blood ! What weighs upon thy heart ?
 Or what *can* weigh when thy dear native land
 Is nigh to throw her grievous burden off ?

And. 'Twas not with heed for France my visage fell,
 But thee.

Pro. But me ! For what ?

And. Those who devote themselves
To virtuous causes, where bad men prevail,
And breed contamination, have at times
A hard and most ungracious part to play,
When those, they love, behoves they mark to suffer.

Pro. Whom do I mark to suffer, yet do love?
I have no kindred, have I? If I have,
It must be only in that far degree
Where distance genders strangeness.

And. Hadst thou not
A son?

Pro. Thou know'st I had! Thou know'st he's dead!
The infant perish'd in the sacking of
My castle.—So it was affirm'd by one
Who brought the horrid tale—Is he *alive*?

And. Be patient! You remember, do you not,
When he was four years old, or thereabouts—
You told me his age, for he was then a boy,
Might pass for six, and so I rated him,
He was so fine a child—you recollect
At e'en that tender age a hard excrescence,
And something like a wart, but larger, which
Like threatening mischief had begun to grow;
At thy request, I from his fore-arm cut.

'Twas rooted deep; as deep of course the wound,
And, answering to the knife, of crucial form!

Pro. I recollect it! Is the boy alive?

And. Listen! 'Twas here I cut it from his arm.
'Tis true another might have such a cause
For surgery in even such a place,
And such a scar the remedy might leave;
Though to my own hand I could safely swear.

Pro. Hast seen the mark on any one?

And. I pray you
Hear what I have to tell, then draw yourself
The inference.

Pro. O Heaven! I have a son,
And he's in jeopardy, and I the cause!

And. Remember you one Angelo Martini?

Pro. Master-of-arms?

And. The same; I went to see
The practice at his school. One—a young man
Of most commanding person, and of 'haviour
To win all hearts—took up the foil to play,
And baring his right arm for freer use—

Pro. You saw the mark! You saw the scar!

And. I did.

The very cicatrix my knife had left.

Pro. I have not heard news of late—and such as this
Comes somewhat suddenly. *Is he a man
Of honour?*

And. I would think him so.

Pro. Would think?

Nay, then, I see what he is!

And. Indeed, my friend,
I cannot say he is, nor yet, is not.

Pro. You say he stands in danger, and from me.
'Tis clear as day—I comprehend it all!
He takes the part of France! His heart is French!
What Sicily gave to him he gives to France,
The curse of Sicily! And if a sword
Light on his head for that, who'll blame the smiter?
Not his own father?—Where abideth he?

And. In Messina, with the governor.

Pro. Perdition!
Scarce is the worst told, ere worse follows it!
The governor!

And. Nay, John of Procida,
Command thyself!

Pro. Couldst thou, if thou wast I?
Didst question him about that scar? Perhaps
'Tis not my son! O Heaven! in what a strait
A father may be put. I wish'd him dead
Just now. I own I did. Didst speak to him
About that mark?

And. No—there were standers-by.

Pro. You follow'd him out?

And. No.

Pro. No!

And. One beckon'd me
Apart, and held mine ear; and when I turn'd
To look for him, I miss'd him. He had gone.

Pro. You have seen him since, and spoken with him!

And. No:
I have craved an audience, but was out of time.

Pro. Indeed? A mighty man! You should have thrust
All let aside, and walk'd into his chamber,
And told him who you were—and what he was!

And. Nay, you forget I was a stranger to him.

Pro. Nay, you forgot you were his father's friend,
And by that title had a right to see him
At any place, at any hour o' the day.
Whom does he pass for?

And. Not thy son.

Pro. That's right!
I am very glad of that!

And. All I could learn
Was this;—that in the sacking of thy castle
Your son alone escaped, a little child.
The governor adopted him, and gave him
The liberal training of a cavalier,
Favour on kindness grew, and love on favour,
And e'en to-day the governor bestows
His only daughter on him.

Pro. Pestilence
 Spring from their union if they wed!
And. My friend!
Pro. When is the ceremony?
And. I have said
 To-day.
Pro. The hour—I mean the very hour.
And. At twelve.
Pro. Let the world end ere it takes place!
 It must be stopp'd!
And. And who shall stop it?
Pro. I!
 Straight to Messina. Come! The shortest way! [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Street in Messina.*

Enter STEPHANO, THOMASO, CARLO.

Carlo. No mischief come, last night, to any friends
 Of yours?
Steph. None, sir, that I have heard.
Carlo. No throat
 In frolic cut? No gamesome robbery?
 No courtesy on wife or daughter forced
 Of any that you know?
Steph. None.
Carlo. Luckless man!
 My brother was compell'd keep open shop
 After the hour of shutting—customers
 So hot, there's not a shelf he has but gapes
 For new replenishing—and that took place
 Not half a month before. No pleasant news
 With you? [*To THOMASO.*]
Thom. None yet!
Carlo. Take comfort, it will come
 Before we get to the end of the next street.
 The Frenchman loves us, sirs; and, like true friend,
 Will keep our spirits from stagnation, though
 It be against our wills. 'Tis good for our health!
 Come on. We'll have news yet, and plenty on't. [*Going.*]
Guis. [*without, at the opposite side*]. Thomaso! Stephano!
 Stop! Turn! [*Enters.*] At last
 You hear me, sirs! I am breath'd with chasing you!
 Why were you not at home?
Thom. Why, what's the matter?
Guis. Blood, sirs!
Carlo. The news!
Guis. News! 'Tis the common cry
 Of every day!
Thom. Yes; but the common'st thing
 That affects others, has a stranger's face

When it comes home to us. Whose blood, Guiscardo?
Take breath and tell us.

Guis. Are you not akin
To Angelo Martini?

Thom. and Steph. What of him?

Guis. His roof-tree suffer'd shame last night!—His daughter!
His only child!—That force could dare assail
A temple of such holy chastity!
The spoiler of her honour and her life—
For with her virgin jewel he purloin'd
The witness of the theft—a mangled corse,
Cast into the street by Angelo, who came
Too late to save, but timely for revenge,
Lies 'fore the father's gate, which hounds beset,
More monstrous for the human forms they wear,
Howling to lap the blood of Angelo;
And casting looks of savage purposes
On the few friends, that, holding yet aloof,
With augmentation might defy their fangs!
Have you your weapons?

Steph. Yes. Who goes without them
That walks through streets of licensed murderers?

Guis. Grasp them then! Hie ye straight to Angelo,
While to the castle I, in hope to move
A friend's good offices to stop the fray,
The favourite of the governor—Fernando.
And be ye resolute, comes it to more blood!
Death's nothing to the fear! There lies the pang,
And that we suffer every hour in the day.

[They go out severally.]

SCENE III.—*A Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter MARTEL and LOUIS.

Martel. What uproar keeps this din without the castle?

Louis. I know not, but the town is all astir;
Hither and thither fly the citizens.
What can it mean?

Martel. Here's one will give the cause.

Enter AMBROSE.

Well, Ambrose?

Amb. Count de Marlez has been murder'd,
And cast into the street! his body hack'd
From head to foot.

Martel. Who did it?

Amb. Angelo
Martini.

Martel. Was it in a quarrel, or
Did he assassinate him?

Amb. I know not.

This moment come I from before the house
Of Angelo Martini, which the friends
Of the slain count beset; while, close at hand,
Those of Martini wait, as if prepared
To take part with the murderer; who, the while,
From open casement in the upper floor,
With savage looks, holds forth a gory arm,
Grasping a blade of the same ghastly hue,
And, waving 't o'er the body of his child,
Blanch'd milk-white of her blood, and half-exposed,
Declares he'll ne'er surrender, save a corse
Mangled like his below.

Martel. Some love affair!

Conquerors will not brook coy mistresses!

Louis. This falls out ominously, does it not,
Upon the nuptial day?

Martel. The nuptial hour!

Strange nuptials, sir! It oft has moved my wonder,
The Governor, a stern and gloomy man,
Should so affect the young Sicilian.
Is't love? I have mark'd him oft, with looks that spoke
Aught but content, gazing upon Fernando
Minutes together; then, with deepest sigh,
Break off the scrutiny—for such it seem'd—
And turn to moody pondering. His daughter
Were better wed, methinks, to one of France
Than to a son of Sicily, of blood
Unknown, and all unfriended like her bridegroom.

Le Clerc [*without*]. Prevent him! Stop him!

Guis. [*without*]. Nay,
I will pass in!

Martel. Suffer him, good Le Clerc;
I know him. He's Fernando's friend, and comes
Doubtless to speak with him.

Louis. How wild he looks!

Amb. And spectre-like.

Guis. [*Rushing in, followed by LE CLERC.*] Fernando! Sirs!
Fernando!

Martel. Why, what's amiss?

Guis. Don't question me, dear sirs;
Fernando!

Martel. Here he is.

Enter FERNANDO.

Guis. [*Catching FERNANDO by the arm.*] Come forth with
me!

Come!—Angelo Martini!—

Fern. [*Resisting.*] Stop.

Guis. Nay, come!

Come!

Thy retinue?—thy guards?—thy empire?—Gone,
 With all their proud appurtenances, and
 No habitation left thee, but thy breast,
 The only house of happiness or woe!
 How shall it be with me then, with a heart,
 Madden'd with torture? Shall I cast about
 To furnish looks, and words, and tones for things,
 I have no interest in, and thou, that hast,
 In equal case wouldst give to disregard?

Emp. Remember thou'rt a subject!

Countess. So I will

While thou'rt the empress; but when thou becomest
 A woman—a mere woman like myself—
 Stepp'st from the eminence that lifts thee 'bove me—
 Levell'st thee to me in one common nature—
 I deal with thee as woman deals with woman!
 I own thy power! I must and do! Thy breath
 Can doom me exile, bondage, what it will!
 There I submit! Thou art the empress there.
 But when thou thwart'st me in the interests
 Which are the right, not more of one than all—
 Trenchest upon my private peace—my love—
 Thou dost me wrong for which I challenge thee,
 As equal may an equal.

Emp. Come! Thy challenge?

What dost allege against me?

Countess. That thou lov'st him!

Emp. Ay, by my troth, as much as thou didst scorn him!

Countess. Was't he accused me to thee?

Emp. Wayward woman,

He never spoke of thee except with love.

Countess. How couldst thou love him then? How could
 thy greatness

Forget itself to try and steal a heart,
 Thou knew'st to be another's?

Emp. Steal!

Countess. Ay, steal!

Must we coin terms for those that are above us,
 To make offences gracious to their ears,
 When they commit them—which, by us enacted,
 They would blast with damning names!

Emp. Thou hast a spirit!

Countess. Thou knew'st he loved me, and didst covet
 him!

Covet a heart at second-hand—an empress!
 Hear me that am a subject, and thy subject—
 His heart was mine, until thou robb'dst me of it—
 Not of it all, but of a part—though if
 A part be gone, go all!—Well, as I said,
 His heart was mine at first. 'Tis gone—My peace,
 Hopes, everything, along with it! What then?
 Would I have it back?—No!—I would sooner die!

Its worth was its fidelity—That lost,
All's lost. Thou covetedst a faithless heart!

Emp. Didst thou deserve that heart?

Countess. [*Weeping.*] I did!—I loved him
Better than thou couldst do!

Emp. I' faith, thou'rt brave!
Thy love of him was persecution.

Countess. [*Weeping.*] Yet
I loved him!

Emp. Loved him! It was tyranny,
Enforced without the mercy of a pause.

Countess. [*Weeping still, and more bitterly.*] The more I
loved him!

Emp. Loved him!—and constrained him
To nuptials he abhor'd.

Countess. I did—and then [*In an agony of tears.*
I loved him most!

Emp. How had it fared with him,
Hadst thou been I?

Countess. Far differently.

Emp. How?

Countess. I then had been above rebuke or blame!
I would have given his merits their fair field,
Encouraged them to challenge their deserts,
Rewarded them till they had lifted him
So near equality to me, the seat
I fill'd, he might have shared along with me.

Emp. That field he found himself, without my aid!
I saw him there, and challenged simple greatness,
In spite of its disguise; desired it doff
Its lowly suit and show the thing it was;
Nor stopp'd till, step by step, I saw it climb
To where it stands; nor mean I to stop there!

Countess. How?

Emp. I design him for the highest grace
I can bestow.

Countess. The highest!

Emp. Yes, beyond
His hopes, until to-day—Until to-day,
Never divulged to him.

Countess. He knows it, then?

Emp. He does; and, till my promise is fulfill'd,
With fears that shake him, spite of certainty
Of his immeasurable happiness—
For such he thinks it—wears a doubtful life.

Countess. Thy hand!

Emp. The hand of her, more proud to be
The empress of his heart than of my realm.

Countess. He shall not take it!

Emp. Not?

Countess. Thy power is huge,
But there are bounds to it!

Emp. What bounds?

Countess. Right!—Law!—
Imperial foot stops there.—It dares not cross,
And if it dares, it shall not!

Emp. Sooth, thou'rt brave!

Countess. He shall not marry!

Emp. No?

Countess. No!

Emp. She's a rock!
She echoes me!

Countess. He shall not marry!

Emp. What!
Again?

Countess. Wast thou the empress of the world,
I'd say to thee again—He shall not marry!

Emp. Thou know'st a let?

Countess. I do!

Emp. The troth he pledged
To Catherine—you see I am advised
Of all! The marriage is annull'd.

Countess. It is?

Emp. It is!

Countess. How?

Emp. By the Church!

Countess. The Church? And yet
He shall not marry!

Emp. What! Not marry thee?

Countess. [*Changing, and falling on her knees.*] Madam!

Emp. The hand that I design for him—
Crown of my favour, his deserts—is thine,
Not mine, my girl—the guerdon fair for which
He would not take my empire in exchange—
Ay, with my hand, to boot!

Countess. My liege, my empress!

Emp. My fiery queen, and have I tamed you now?
Tamed you, so soon! I half repent me on't.
Mine's the true spirit, namesake! It admires
To see itself in others. 'Faith, my glass
Never reflected me more honestly
Than thou didst, even now. Listen to me.
I am thy Huon's friend, and nothing more.
Rise! Now we'll talk as sister does with sister.
Hither thy Huon bears me company—
Unwarn'd to what intent, until to-day.
Until to-day, in darkness that the bar
The Church, with thy fair aid, 'twixt him and thee
Had set—the Church, at my persisting suit,
Has quite annull'd; and now he's in the lists
Striving to win thee! He that never yet,
In strait of life or death, much less a tilt,
Suffer'd defeat! [*Trumpets.*]—That flourish is the close.
Smile at it, girl! It makes thee Huon's wife!

Huon—no more the serf—but nobleman—
Nor nobleman alone! This hour a prince,
For thy fair sake!

Countess [*dejectedly to herself*]. Would he were still the
serf.

Emp. Dejected, girl!

Countess. Madam.

Emp. They come! Come hither!
Here take thy seat in the centre. Here thou art chief.
We are but second! Smile—Thy Huon comes!

[*Music.* ULRICK and the rest re-enter from the
Tournament. The EMPRESS anxiously surveys them.
The COUNTESS absent and dejected.

Where is he?

Countess. Madam?

Emp. Which is Huon?

[*Aside to COUNTESS.*

Countess. Which?

Emp. [*Aside to COUNTESS.*] Methinks he is not here. Canst
make him out?

Girl, tell me, is thy lover here or not?

He seems not here, and yet he must be here.

Herald. Madam, the lists are closed. The victor waits
The prize which he has won. Shall he receive it?

Emp. [*Aside to COUNTESS.*] Shall I say yes? I must say
yes. Thou smilest.

I will say yes!—He shall receive the prize. [*Aloud.*

Who is he that bows?

Herald. The victor, madam.

Emp. [*To COUNTESS.*] Ha!

Do you know him?

Countess. Not with his visor; yet
Methinks I ought to know him, were it he.

Emp. Sir Knight, so please you, raise your visor. 'Tis
The prince of Milan! Girl—what means thine eye
To blaze with joy? It looks on thy despair!
The prince of Milan 'tis that wins thy hand!
Hear'st thou me? Know'st thou what I say?

Countess. I do!

Both hear and comprehend thee.

Emp. Ay, and smile?

Countess. And smile.

Emp. Art thou thyself? Am I myself?
I think myself the same! Where is Huon?

Ulrick. Gone

To take his armour off.

Emp. How fared it with him?

Ulrick. He enter'd first the lists, and one by one
O'erthrew all comers, till the prince of Milan
Unhorsed him.

Countess. Is he hurt?

Ulrick. No, madam.

Countess. [*Starting up.*] Thanks!
My Lord, bring Huon hither! Hither! Hie!
Now all is as it should be.

Emp. Should be, girl?
Say rather should not be. Thy lover's foil'd.
Where is the ashy cheek, that meets disaster,
The brow that's like the wrack? the gusty breath?
The quivering bloodless lip and quaking frame?
These should be, and they are not! Where are they?
Or rather, wherefore see I in their stead
Things 'twould become to wait on holidays
Rather than days of penance? Look not thus,
Else thou wilt make me hate thee!

Countess. Madam, madam,
I tell thee, and believe me, all is well.

Emp. [*Indignantly.*] Then let the prince of Milan take his prize.

Fred. I claim it on my knee!

[*At the moment the Prince kneels, HUON led by ULRICK enters, and the COUNTESS rushes towards him.*]

Countess. How is it, Huon?
Thou look'st as hurt.

Huon. Sped in the spirit, lady.
Forgetful of my charger, all unmindful,
He lack'd my argument to hearten him,
Bent on the most surpassing prize alone,
I did not think to change him, and he fail'd me!

Countess. Fortune, farewell! and pride go with thee! Go!
Welcome adversity! Shake hands with me,
Thou tester of true hearts! whose homely fare
No flatterer sits down to—hollow friend—
Foe, masking thoughts of scorn with smiling face;—
But truth and honesty! affection stanch!
That grasps the hand before it scans the sleeve,
And greets the lowly portal with a grace
More winning far than his, who thanks the gate
That spreads with pride, to let a monarch in.

Emp. Girl, I am loath to speak in terms of blame,
But thou hast much offended courtesy:
Not only slighting me, thy sov'reign lady,
But him to whom thy fate awards thee bride.

Countess. A wife must be a widow, ere a bride.

Emp. A wife?—No wife art thou!

Countess. I am a wife!
Before this goodly presence I proclaim it.
A wife by stealth, but still a wedded wife!
Wedded for love, as fervent, durable,
As ever led a woman to the altar!

Emp. Where is thy husband? Hear'st thou—where is he?

Countess. Where my remorse, contrition, deprecation,
Homage, and love, now throw me! I am kneeling
At his feet! [*Kneels to HUON*]

Huon. Thy husband, I?

Countess. My husband, thou!

Huon. Was I not wed to Catherine?

Countess. Thou wast.

My name is Catherine, as thou shouldst know,
But, as thou knewest not, till now; the lips
Pronounced that name in wedding thee—the hand
Then given to thee—the troth then plighted thee—
Were mine as truly as the breath that now
Avows I am thy wife!—in debt to fate
For baffling thee; for now she owns thee lord
In thy adversity!

Huon. Thou kneel'st to me!

In marvel of thy words!—I overlook'd thee,
Madam!—My wife, rise—pray you, rise!—my own,
My dear liege lady ever! I am feeble
In words; but oh! the strife is strong, within,
Of wonder, gratitude, humility,
Pride, honour, love, outdoing one another!

Enter CATHERINE, disguised.

Cath. Fair Empress, justice! justice!

Emp. What comes now?

Who asks for justice?

Cath. One that is most wrong'd

In his honour; cheated by a craven knight,
Who promised him to give him meeting here;
But hath broken his word—no doubt, through cowardice.

Emp. What is his name?

Cath. Sir Rupert.

Sir Rup. [*Stepping forward.*] He speaks false!
I am here to my appointment.

Cath. Are you so?

Have you not sprain'd your arm?

Sir Rup. No!

Cath. Nor your leg?

Sir Rup. No!

Cath. Nor your side, that you can't sit your horse?

Sir Rup. No!

Cath. Wonderful! Your spirit does not fail?

Sir Rup. No!

Cath. Yet more wonderful, you'll fight me?

Sir Rup. Yes!

Cath. You shall, but where I pray you are your friends?

Sir Otto and Sir Conrad. [*Coming forward.*] Here!

Cath. Gentlemen, I am sorry for the fall
You got in tilting for the Countess; but
'Tis nothing to the one which he shall rue,
As you shall see. Down on your knees and beg
Your life.

Sir Rup. And beg my life!

Cath. Now what's the use

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Of pondering, on that which must be done?
 Do I not know, sir, that you have borne cuffs
 A thousand times, as well you know you have,
 And know you not, a bold face never yet
 Made a bold heart? Down on your knees at once!
 Valour won't come for stamping, sir! Entreat
 Your friends to hold you; that's a better way
 To pass for a brave man.

Sir Rup. I'll smite thee.

Cath. Do!

If you dare!

[*Throwing off cloak.*

Ha! Have I brought you to thy knee at last, sir?

Said I not truly, that I would bring you there?

Beware I say not I shall keep you there!

Sir Rup. What! Catherine?

Countess. Yes, Catherine, Sir Rupert.

Sir Rup. O happiness!

Countess. Which thou hast well deserved.

Sir Rup. Thou still wast gracious to me.

Countess. For thy truth,

Attested by thy jealous poverty.

I saw thy honest love for Catherine,

In secret cherish'd, as thou thought'st—as one

Conceals a costly treasure he has found,

And rightfully may keep, but, being poor,

Fear to display it, through the world's charity.

Thy Catherine, whom before thou fear'dst to woo,

Now dares make suit to thee, and challenges thee,

To make her thine. So, take her, if thou wilt,

And with her honour, for thy honest love!

Cath. O—

Countess. Huon, my husband—Lord! canst thou forgive

The scornful maid, for the devoted wife,

Had cleaved to thee, though ne'er she *own'd* thee lord?

Huon. I nothing see, except thy wondrous love.

Countess. Madam, our happiness lifts up to thee

Its eyes in penitence and gratitude!

Thou, chief in station, first to give desert,

Despite its lowliness, its lofty due!

O, thou hast taught a lesson to all greatness,

Whether of rank or wealth, that 'tis the roof

Stately and broad which ne'er was meant to house

Equality alone—whose porch is never

So proud, as when it welcomes—in desert,

That comes in its own fair simplicity.

END OF LOVE.

JOHN OF PROCIDA;

OR,

The Bridals of Messina.

A TRAGEDY.—IN FIVE ACTS.

TO CAPTAIN CHARLES H. TOWNLEY, R.N.

4, GREAT GEORGE'S SQUARE, LIVERPOOL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have the greatest pride and pleasure in now redeeming an old promise—that of dedicating A PLAY of mine to you.

Whether as a gallant naval officer, an accomplished seaman, or an amiable private citizen, I do not know the man who ought to supersede you in receiving this humble heart-tribute from your affectionate and grateful servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

29, ALFRED PLACE, BEDFORD SQUARE.

September, 1840.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1840.)

SICILIANS.

<i>Procidu</i>	Mr. MOORE.
<i>Fernando</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Guiscardo</i>	Mr. COOPER.
<i>Martini</i>	Mr. W. H. PAYNE.
<i>Andrea</i>	Mr. HEMMING.
<i>Carlo</i>	Mr. BINGE.
<i>Stephano</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Thomaso</i>	Mr. COLLETT.
<i>Francisco</i>	Mr. MORELLI.

FRENCH.

<i>Governor</i>	Mr. DIDDEAR.
<i>Martel</i>	Mr. BRINDAL.
<i>Louis</i>	Mr. FITZJAMES.
<i>Ambrose</i>	Mr. BLAND.
<i>Le Clerc</i>	Mr. WIGAN.
<i>François</i>	Mr. HONNER.
<i>Pierre</i>	Mr. CONNELL.
<i>Anthonio</i>	Mr. S. SMITH.
<i>Eugene</i>	Mr. THOMPSON.
<i>Isoline</i>	Miss E. TREE.
<i>Marguerite</i>	Miss FITZJAMES.

JOHN OF PROCIDA;

OR,

The Bridals of Messina.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Pass in the Mountains near Messina.*

Enter GUISCARDO and STEPHANO.

Guis. His words were fire—both light and heat! At once
With zeal, they warm'd us; and convinced, with reason.
I had read and heard of eloquence before;
How 'tis despotic, takes the heart by storm—
Whate'er the ramparts, prejudice, or use
Environ it withal—how, 'fore its' march,
Stony resolves have given way like flax,
How it can raise, or lay, the mighty surge
Of popular commotion, as the wind,
The wave that frets the sea;—but till to-day,
I never proved its power. When he began,
A thousand hearers prick'd their ears to list,
With each a different heart; when he left off,
Each man could tell his neighbour's by his own.

Steph. Is't John of Procida?

Guis. So rumour says.

Who else? The constant'st friend of Sicily—
The friend that loves, yet suffers for his love.
Heard'st ever lips before, with power like his?
A holy man, and brigand, near me stood,
Wedged by the press together; churlishly
They first endured their compell'd neighbourhood,
And shrank from contact, they would fain escape.
The one with terror; and with scorn, the other,
Who blazed with life and passion, like a torch
Beside a taper;—such the man of prayer
Appear'd, in contrast with the freebooter.
But lo! the change! soon as the orator
That universal chord, with master skill,
Essay'd—the love of country—Like two springs,
Ravines apart, whose waters blend at last
In some sweet valley; leaning cheek to cheek,

Attracted by resistless sympathy,
 Their tears together ran, one goodly river !
 Hark ! the dispersing crowd, taking their leave
 From the last hill-tops. Let us join them.

[*They cheer.*]

Steph. Hither

Come Andrea and John of Procida.
 Let's on, my friend, nor interrupt their converse,
 For it seems deep, and earnest.

Guis. Have with you.

I would Fernando had been here, that friend
 I scarce can boast, yet can't refrain from loving.
 If there be latent virtue in his blood,
 Like what endears the land that gives us birth,
 Such heart enforcement sure had call'd it forth !

[*They go out.*]

Enter PROCIDA, disguised as a Cordelier, and ANDREA.

And. You move my wonder, past the speaking on't.
 I never dream'd, in such extremity,
 Such hope could be so near !

Pro. 'Tis in the crisis
 The fever does or dies. Our friends abroad
 Are warm, and not a few ; the fleet, you see
 In the offing, and suppose the Pope's, is ours ;
 At home, Sicilians are as one single man,
 Their thoughts, their feelings, their resolves, the same.
 In this disguise, each quarter of the isle
 Where man hath habitation, house, or cave,
 I have visited ; and tuned the minds of all
 To the same temper and the selfsame aim,
 Vengeance and liberty ! Before a week
 The hordes of France shall dwindle to the man
 Whose execution ends them.

And. Retribution
 Indeed !

Pro. Yes ; sweeping and definitive.
 Thou seem'st to lower at it. Hast any part
 In France ? Dost owe her kindness or ruth ?—
 The tyranny that Sicily weeps, daily,
 With blood !—her children's scourge, as testify
 Murder and rapine, that unblushingly
 Enact their parts in open day, and lust,
 With quite as little shame ! I know that men
 Will turn to tigers in a storm'd town
 That's yielded them to sack ; but Syracuse,
 Palermo, and Messina, stood no siege ;
 And yet were they sack'd, and still the game goes on,
 And in cold blood ! What weighs upon thy heart ?
 Or what *can* weigh when thy dear native land
 Is nigh to throw her grievous burden off ?

And. 'Twas not with heed for France my visage fell,
 But thee.

Pro. But me ! For what ?

And. Those who devote themselves
To virtuous causes, where bad men prevail,
And breed contamination, have at times
A hard and most ungracious part to play,
When those, they love, behoves they mark to suffer.

Pro. Whom do I mark to suffer, yet do love?
I have no kindred, have I? If I have,
It must be only in that far degree
Where distance genders strangeness.

And. Hadst thou not
A son?

Pro. Thou know'st I had! Thou know'st he's dead!
The infant perish'd in the sacking of
My castle.—So it was affirm'd by one
Who brought the horrid tale—Is he *alive*?

And. Be patient! You remember, do you not,
When he was four years old, or thereabouts—
You told me his age, for he was then a boy,
Might pass for six, and so I rated him,
He was so fine a child—you recollect
At e'en that tender age a hard excrescence,
And something like a wart, but larger, which
Like threatening mischief had begun to grow;
At thy request, I from his fore-arm cut.

'Twas rooted deep; as deep of course the wound,
And, answering to the knife, of crucial form!

Pro. I recollect it! Is the boy alive?

And. Listen! 'Twas here I cut it from his arm.
'Tis true another might have such a cause
For surgery in even such a place,
And such a scar the remedy might leave;
Though to my own hand I could safely swear.

Pro. Hast seen the mark on any one?

And. I pray you
Hear what I have to tell, then draw yourself
The inference.

Pro. O Heaven! I have a son,
And he's in jeopardy, and I the cause!

And. Remember you one Angelo Martini?

Pro. Master-of-arms?

And. The same; I went to see
The practice at his school. One—a young man
Of most commanding person, and of 'haviour
To win all hearts—took up the foil to play,
And baring his right arm for freer use—

Pro. You saw the mark! You saw the scar!

And. I did.

The very cicatrix my knife had left.

Pro. I have not heard news of late—and such as this
Comes somewhat suddenly. *Is he a man
Of honour?*

And. I would think him so.

Pro. Would think?

Nay, then, I see what he is!

And. Indeed, my friend,
I cannot say he is, nor yet, is not.

Pro. You say he stands in danger, and from me.
'Tis clear as day—I comprehend it all!
He takes the part of France! His heart is French!
What Sicily gave to him he gives to France,
The curse of Sicily! And if a sword
Light on his head for that, who'll blame the smiter?
Not his own father?—Where abideth he?

And. In Messina, with the governor.

Pro. Perdition!
Scarce is the worst told, ere worse follows it!
The governor!

And. Nay, John of Procida,
Command thyself!

Pro. Couldst thou, if thou wast I?
Didst question him about that scar? Perhaps
'Tis not my son! O Heaven! in what a strait
A father may be put. I wish'd him dead
Just now. I own I did. Didst speak to him
About that mark?

And. No—there were standers-by.

Pro. You follow'd him out?

And. No.

Pro. No!

And. One beckon'd me
Apart, and held mine ear; and when I turn'd
To look for him, I miss'd him. He had gone.

Pro. You have seen him since, and spoken with him!

And. No:
I have craved an audience, but was out of time.

Pro. Indeed? A mighty man! You should have thrust
All let aside, and walk'd into his chamber,
And told him who you were—and what he was!

And. Nay, you forget I was a stranger to him.

Pro. Nay, you forgot you were his father's friend,
And by that title had a right to see him
At any place, at any hour o' the day.
Whom does he pass for?

And. Not thy son.

Pro. That's right!
I am very glad of that!

And. All I could learn
Was this;—that in the sacking of thy castle
Your son alone escaped, a little child.
The governor adopted him, and gave him
The liberal training of a cavalier,
Favour on kindness grew, and love on favour,
And e'en to-day the governor bestows
His only daughter on him.

Pro. Pestilence
 Spring from their union if they wed!
And. My friend!
Pro. When is the ceremony?
And. I have said
 To-day.
Pro. The hour—I mean the very hour.
And. At twelve.
Pro. Let the world end ere it takes place!
 It must be stopp'd!
And. And who shall stop it?
Pro. I!
 Straight to Messina. Come! The shortest way! [*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*A Street in Messina.*

Enter STEPHANO, THOMASO, CARLO.

Carlo. No mischief come, last night, to any friends
 Of yours?
Steph. None, sir, that I have heard.
Carlo. No throat
 In frolic cut? No gamesome robbery?
 No courtesy on wife or daughter forced
 Of any that you know?
Steph. None.
Carlo. Luckless man!
 My brother was compell'd keep open shop
 After the hour of shutting—customers
 So hot, there's not a shelf he has but gapes
 For new replenishing—and that took place
 Not half a month before. No pleasant news
 With you? [*To THOMASO.*]
Thom. None yet!
Carlo. Take comfort, it will come
 Before we get to the end of the next street.
 The Frenchman loves us, sirs; and, like true friend,
 Will keep our spirits from stagnation, though
 It be against our wills. 'Tis good for our health!
 Come on. We'll have news yet, and plenty on't. [*Going.*]
Guis. [*without, at the opposite side.*] Thomaso! Stephano!
 Stop! Turn! [*Enters.*] At last
 You hear me, sirs! I am breath'd with chasing you!
 Why were you not at home?
Thom. Why, what's the matter?
Guis. Blood, sirs!
Carlo. The news!
Guis. News! 'Tis the common cry
 Of every day!
Thom. Yes; but the common'st thing
 That affects others, has a stranger's face

When it comes home to us. Whose blood, Guiscardo?
Take breath and tell us.

Guis. Are you not akin
To Angelo Martini?

Thom. and Steph. What of him?

Guis. His roof-tree suffer'd shame last night!—His daughter!
His only child!—That force could dare assail
A temple of such holy chastity!
The spoiler of her honour and her life—
For with her virgin jewel he purloin'd
The witness of the theft—a mangled corse,
Cast into the street by Angelo, who came
Too late to save, but timely for revenge,
Lies 'fore the father's gate, which hounds beset,
More monstrous for the human forms they wear,
Howling to lap the blood of Angelo;
And casting looks of savage purposes
On the few friends, that, holding yet aloof,
With augmentation might defy their fangs!
Have you your weapons?

Steph. Yes. Who goes without them
That walks through streets of licensed murderers?

Guis. Grasp them then! Hie ye straight to Angelo,
While to the castle I, in hope to move
A friend's good offices to stop the fray,
The favourite of the governor—Fernando.
And be ye resolute, comes it to more blood!
Death's nothing to the fear! There lies the pang,
And that we suffer every hour in the day.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*A Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter MARTEL and LOUIS.

Martel. What uproar keeps this din without the castle?

Louis. I know not, but the town is all astir;
Hither and thither fly the citizens.
What can it mean?

Martel. Here's one will give the cause.

Enter AMBROSE.

Well, Ambrose?

Amb. Count de Marlez has been murder'd,
And cast into the street! his body hack'd
From head to foot.

Martel. Who did it?

Amb. Angelo
Martini.

Martel. Was it in a quarrel, or
Did he assassinate him?

Amb. I know not.

This moment come I from before the house
Of Angelo Martini, which the friends
Of the slain count beset; while, close at hand,
Those of Martini wait, as if prepared
To take part with the murderer; who, the while,
From open casement in the upper floor,
With savage looks, holds forth a gory arm,
Grasping a blade of the same ghastly hue,
And, waving 't o'er the body of his child,
Blanch'd milk-white of her blood, and half-exposed,
Declares he'll ne'er surrender, save a corse
Mangled like his below.

Martel. Some love affair!

Conquerors will not brook coy mistresses!

Louis. This falls out ominously, does it not,
Upon the nuptial day?

Martel. The nuptial hour!

Strange nuptials, sir! It oft has moved my wonder,
The Governor, a stern and gloomy man,
Should so affect the young Sicilian.
Is't love? I have mark'd him oft, with looks that spoke
Aught but content, gazing upon Fernando
Minutes together; then, with deepest sigh,
Break off the scrutiny—for such it seem'd—
And turn to moody pondering. His daughter
Were better wed, methinks, to one of France
Than to a son of Sicily, of blood
Unknown, and all unfriended like her bridegroom.

Le Clerc [*without*]. Prevent him! Stop him!

Guis. [*without*]. Nay,
I will pass in!

Martel. Suffer him, good Le Clerc;
I know him. He's Fernando's friend, and comes
Doubtless to speak with him.

Louis. How wild he looks!

Amb. And spectre-like.

Guis. [*Rushing in, followed by LE CLERC.*] Fernando! Sirs!
Fernando!

Martel. Why, what's amiss?

Guis. Don't question me, dear sirs;
Fernando!

Martel. Here he is.

Enter FERNANDO.

Guis. [*Catching FERNANDO by the arm.*] Come forth with
me!

Come!—Angelo Martini!—

Fern. [*Resisting.*] Stop.

Guis. Nay, come!

Come!

Fern. What's the matter?

Guis. Read it in my looks,
And save the time of telling on't!—or come,
And I will tell you as we go along!
Come!

Fern. Hold! you'll tear my sleeve. Do you not know
It is my wedding-day?

Guis. Do you not know
A man call'd Angelo Martini, and
Not that he's in danger?

Fern. I infer so.

Guis. Thou dost? and art not now upon the way
To his house? Thy tutor! Angelo Martini!
'Sdeath, art thou flesh or stone? Offer'st thou not
To move!

Fern. You'll find it husbandry of time
To spend what's needed; else, you save to waste.
What of Martini?

Guis. Ay!—So!—Is't the way?
Ought friends to take it leisurely in straits
Where hottest speed is slow for those they love,
Lying in jeopardy? Sit down, sir. Well [Seats himself.]
'We sit as stand!—we progress either way
As fast! Sit down and listen. Yesternight—
Pray you your chair—I cannot well go on
Until I see you at your ease. [FERNANDO sits.]—Last night,
As I said, a thief—not such as filches coin—
Was the unbidden guest of Angelo;
Chamber'd with his fair child, without her leave,
As her gored breast can vouch for you; Angelo—
I trust my tongue does not outstep your ear?

Fern. Go on!

Guis. In good time, sir. Well! Angelo
Waked by a shriek—'twas not *without* the house,
But came from the quarter where his daughter couch'd—
And—taking the strange summons with more heat
Of apprehension, than will suffer one,
That hath the use of limb, to lie abed,
Or sit his chair as we do—to afford
The aid was needed, rush'd where he might give it,
And at the door encounter'd him who had made him
A host without his privity or wish,
Dagger in hand, sir, slinking from the bier,
Had been, an hour before, the virgin's bed!

Fern. What follow'd?

Guis. One might guess, a blow!—Yes, sir—
While the blood runs 'twill heat or cool upon
Occasion. Yes, sir; Angelo, our friend,
A generous man, although we say it, like
To exact penalty for injury
Done to a common friend—and how much more
An only child!—struck—nor with naked hand,

Nor easily contented ! Blow begot
Blow, till the body of the Count——

Fern. What count ?

Guis. The Count de Marlez.

Fern. Was he stabb'd by Angelo ?

Guis. And stabb'd till not a palm's breadth of his body
But bears the crimson seal that witnesses
The glut of ravening vengeance, as it lies
In the street, cast forth the casement, of whose sill
Angelo makes a bier to show his child
To some amaze-confounded lookers on.

While the retainers, countrymen, and friends
Of the Count assault the gate of Angelo
To get at him and tear him limb from limb ;
The which thy timely presence had prevented.
But not enough thou know'st thy friend requires thee ;
Behoves his need be woven a history ;
And while the loom's a-going, which I must ply,
They massacre the man who taught and loved thee !

Fern. Go forth, my friends, and succour Angelo.
Take others with you—all the aid you can !
Dissuade his enemies from violence.
Use the Duke's name ! Command them to forbear,
And leave rebuke to him. [MARTEL and others rush out.

Guis. Go'st thou not too ?
Play'st thou the friend by heartless deputy,
To foil the foes that work with all their hearts !
Keep'st thou the castle when Martini's house
Is made the stall of savage butchery ?
Lend'st him a *finger* when he wants thy hand,
Thy limbs, and body ?

Fern. 'Tis my wedding-day ;
The very hour I lead my bride to church.

Guis. Thou wast his son to Angelo Martini,
And when thy presence would be life to him,
And it is ask'd of thee, thou givest it not,
But send'st him that of men who would look with coldness,
If not with joy, upon Martini's carcass ;
Because thy nuptials may not be delay'd !
Ached thy bride's head, would it not stop them ?—or
Would they go on, fell the Duke sudden sick ?
Or chanced to shake Messina with a fit
Of the earthquake ? or the Cataracts of Ætna
Began to play ?—But not a pause, although
Thou heard'st the life-blood gurgling in the throat
Of Angelo Martini ! Fare thee well—
If well ingratitude fared ever.
Mingle thy blood with those, at thought of whom,
Wast thou the tithe of a Sicilian,
Thy blood would curdle ! We were brothers once ;
One mind—one soul ! We now are two—apart !
Disjoin'd ! Opposed ! Never to meet again
Except to the woe of the one or t'other of us. [Goes out.

Fern. Come back! Fool! Meddler! Braggart!

Iso. [*Entering.*] How is this?
What dost thou with thy weapon in thy hand!
Ha! by thy looks, it was not without need
Thou drewest it! Sweet heaven! I saw thee thus
Last night!

Fern. Where, dearest?

Iso. In my dreams, Fernando;
That brought me naught but fearful images!
Tumults, where daggers gleam'd and blood ran free
Along the kennels of the streets, instead
Of its own channels. There, my friend, were you
And I in the midst, your one arm circling me,
Your other my defence 'gainst horrid men
That stood around, a stride or two aloof,
Like hounds, awhile at bay, prepared to spring!
Ah! then I knew the taste of death—great Heavens!
The sickness on't! Yet e'en that sickness still
Sweetness, methought, to die along with thee.
They struck—you fell! I waked while yet the room
Rang with a shriek. Put up thy sword, lest now
A prodigy should harrow up my soul,
And drops of gore, uncall'd, start on its blade!
Is't up?

Fern. It is.

Iso. 'Tis very strange, Fernando;
This is our wedding-day, and yet I feel
As though we should not marry.

Fern. Wouldst thou, then,
Our nuptials should be marr'd?

Iso. No!—would you think
'Twas the coy maid of but a week ago
That answer'd, now, so promptly? 'Twas not quickly,
I learn'd to love you—though, to do you justice,
No master ever labour'd more to teach.
But now, methinks, I have the lesson better
By heart than you have.

Fern. Better!

Iso. Yes, Fernando!
And so you'd find, were you to slight the pupil
You took such pains with once. I would not have
Our nuptials marr'd,—and, more, they shan't be so,
Have I the power to help it.

Fern. Isoline—
Thy father!—

Iso. Well?—Say on;
I'd hear thee say't, though all the world were by.

Fern. I bless thee for thy bounteous love!

Enter GOVERNOR.

Gov. Come, child!
And on my other hand, Fernando, come.
The bridal company, in readiness

To attend you to the altar, wait for you.

[*As they are going, MARTEL and LOUIS enter hastily.*]

What would you, friends?

Martel. A word, sir, with Fernando.

Gov. Be brief, then, as you may. [*Leading ISOLINE off.*]

Iso. [*Stopping and turning.*] Fernando!

Fern. Love,

A moment and I'm with you!

Gov. Isoline!

Iso. I come!—the ground appears to hold my steps.

[*She goes out with the GOVERNOR.*]

Fern. Well, friends; were you in time?

Martel. To see the house

Of Angelo Martini in a blaze;

Lit by his own hand, the funereal pyre

Of his slain child! Whence, soon as 'twas in flames,

Taking advantage of the pause in which

Amaze enchain'd his foes, with clotted blade

Old Angelo burst forth, a spectacle

Of blood-congealing horror, that awhile

Deprived of use the members which, except

For such a frost, had dealt him fifty deaths.

But soon it turn'd to thaw, yet not until

Martini's friends surrounded him; and now

Along the streets a running fight they keep,

Marking an ample, ghastly track, with blood,

And here and there a body drain'd of it.

Fern. For mercy's sake provide you with a guard

And use all pains to stop this hideous fray,

And above all to save Martini's life!

Fly friends! O spare not speed! Do all you can

This fray, untimely, to o'ertake, and stop!

[*MARTEL and LOUIS go out; FERNANDO following.*]

SCENE IV.—*The Outside of a Church.*

Enter Virgins strewing Flowers after the Bridal Party.

CHORUS OF VIRGINS.

As now the track with flowers we strew,

Your path of life with joys be fair!

Though wither these, no fading there;

Nor thorny care your footsteps rue.

[*At the end of the Singing, Tumult is heard without at a distance.*]

Gov. What din is this that seems approaching us?

Le Clerc. [*Entering hastily.*] My lord, take shelter in the church! There's death

In the streets.

Gov. What! Of Messina, sir; and I
Its governor? Am I to slink away
In fear? Swords, gentlemen! What man is he
Comes first? who flies, yet halts,—whom they, in chase of,
Striving, yet seem to fear, to overtake,
Turning pursuit to flight whene'er he stops
And shows them front?

Le Clerc. 'Tis Angelo Martini.

Gov. What savage deed hath made a brute of him,
That men become a pack, and hunt him thus?

Le Clerc. He has kill'd the Count de Marlez!

Fern. Life for life!

The count first kill'd his daughter—little wrong,
To wrong more grievous that preceded it.

Gov. You are sure of this?

Fern. I am.

Gov. Succour him, sirs.

Fern. Too late!

Mart. [*without*]. Take that!

[*Enters, staggering, followed by GUISCARDO and others
with swords drawn.*

—Full payment, slave, and prompt!

As you are Christian men, don't suffer them
Hack me to death. I am wounded mortally!

[*Falls.*

Fern. How is it, Angelo Martini?

Mart. Thus,

Fernando, thus!—My daughter!—Where were you?
But I forgive you!

[*Dies.*

Fern. O, look up, old man!

Guis. He sleeps too sound, Fernando, to awake!

My lord, the Governor, protection for
The friends of Angelo Martini, who,
With naked weapons had not stood in the streets
But to protect him from foul butchery,
His mansion suffer'd violence, last night,
And murder in the person of his child;
Now burn'd to ashes with her natal roof,
Which Angelo himself in frenzy fired.
He caught and slew the caitiff, for which act,
By nature warranted, if not by law,
Began this game of death, which we would spoil,
But thus the just yet weaker side hath lost.

Gov. Though great his crime first slain, the blood, so shed,
Was French! Moreover, it was noble! Look
Yourselves to your lives—I will not answer for them
Beyond Messina! Hence, and sheathe your blades.
Marks are upon them that offend our eyes,
And breed you danger!

Guis. Are we safe, the while?

Gov. You are, but quit Messina. Guard them to
The outskirts of the town.

Guis. Fernando, speak.

Look there. Your bridal flowers have gone, you see,
To deck a bloody bier. So fare thy joys!

[Goes out with others guarded.]

Gov. Remove the body. In our way it lies.

Iso. Nay, father; sooner let us go about!

Gov. Come on, then.

Pro. *[Coming from the back of the stage.]* Stop. The rites
must not proceed.

Gov. They have not yet begun!

Pro. Nor must begin!

Gov. Who shall prevent them?

Pro. Heaven. In the name of which

I charge you to desist!

Gov. Your reasons?

Pro. Those,

The bridegroom, when alone, shall learn; for him
They most regard.

Fern. Impart them, then!

Pro. Not here.

Gov. You juggle with us!

Pro. No; the part I act

Is honest.

Gov. You are a religious man?

Pro. A man devoted to a holy cause!

Young man, let go that hand and come with me!

Iso. Is this the dark fulfilling of my dream?

Respect you, my Fernando, what he says?

Fern. His tone, his words, his looks, his gestures, all
Declare authority.

Iso. O, do not go?

Pro. He must, would he escape my curse; which here
On him, and all who hold alliance with him,
I shall invoke, resists he my commands.

Gov. You dare not do it!

Pro. Dare not!—listen then—

Iso. Peace!—Drop my hand and go.

Pro. She bids thee go.

Come.

Iso. Go, Fernando!

Pro. Mark again; she bids thee.

Why shouldst thou hesitate? The cause is thine.

And thou thyself art constituted judge.

I hope thou'rt a brave man, and not afraid

To trust thyself with me. If idly, or

On slight pretence I interpose, thou knowest

Thou canst come back, and then the rites go on.

So mayst thou gain thy bride, and 'scape my curse.

Iso. Shall he come back in any case?

Pro. He shall.

Iso. Go! go! Fernando.

Pro. That is the third time
She bade thee go.

Fern. I follow !

Pro. Come along.

[*PROCIDA and FERNANDO go out. ISOLINE faints in her father's arms, as the latter disappears.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Mountain Pass. Etna in the distance.*

Enter PROCIDA and FERNANDO.

Pro. Look up. What seest thou ?

Fern. Etna.

Pro. Where stands Etna ?

Fern. In Sicily.

Pro. Then this is Sicily,
Where Etna stands, and thou look'st up to it.
And yet, methinks, thou knowest not thou stand'st
In Sicily.

Fern. I know it, well as thou !

Pro. Deny it, then ! Tell him, who says thou stand'st there,
He but insults thee ! Rather say thou stand'st
In any other isle that spots the sea ;
And give thy oath to it, though Etna there,
Before thee, should break silence at the lie,
And bellow forth—" 'Tis Sicily thou stand'st in ! "

Fern. Beware ! young blood is hot.

Pro. Behoves it, then,
Beware it runs no peril from its heat.
Young blood is generous, too !—not always !—Then
Its heat is virtue bringing virtue forth,
As sun, the healthful plant, in stronger flower.
Its heat is as the thing it acts upon ;
As summer in the garden genders fruit,
But in the swamp breeds poison. Know me, sir,
So far. I wear a sword ! [*Throws off his gown.*] Now of thy
heat

Why should I stand in fear ?

Fern. Lest thou offend
Mine honour !

Pro. Show it me, I'll not offend it ;
Else I offend mine own ! If I gainsay
The square, the plummet, or the level, what
Shall I gain credence for ? I am a fool
Or knave. I either know not ; or deny,
Yet know ! But honour is the name as well
As thing, and with the thing not always goes,
But serves a spurious owner, as the stamp
Of gold at times is given to base coin.
The gambler that will load a die, will cut
Your throat, so you dare tell him on't—for honour !

The libertine who uses, for your shame,
 Your hospitable trust—a felon, worse
 Than he who filches purses with his sword—
 Demands your blood, if you impugn his honour!
 Whence, with a coward world, the bully Lust,
 Hath gracious entertainment at the hands
 Which hold the custody of maidens' snow,
 And never question'd matrons'. What do you say
 To the honour of a traitor—false at once
 To his liege lord and country?—taking part
 With their arch, pitiless, contentless foes?
 Shall such a man have honour? Ay, shall he so,
 Hath he the bloodhound's quality to vouch
 The barefaced lie a truth!

Fern. Thou lovest danger!

Pro. No, I love virtue, sir, and fear not danger.
 Art thou Sicilian?

Fern. Yes.

Pro. Sicilian born?

Fern. Yes.

Pro. In the mountain island first drew breath?

Fern. Yes.

Pro. Art thou sure? Where saw'st thou first the sun,
 To know him as thou recollectest?

Fern. In
 Messina.

Pro. Knowest thou the history
 Of this thy native land?—who was her king
 When first thou mad'st acquaintance with the sun,
 The blessed sun God gave thee leave to see
 When he vouchsafed thee draw the breath of life
 In Sicily?

Fern. Why Manfred, then, was king.

Pro. What came of him?

Fern. He lost his crown.

Pro. 'Tis false!

Fern. [*Aside.*] What awes me in the presence of this man,
 That while he chafes me thus, I thus forbear!

Pro. Were one to take thy purse from thee by force,
 Wouldst say that thou hadst lost it? Thou wouldst say
 That thou wast robb'd of it! So Manfred was
 Robb'd of his crown. Lost it! Who, say you now,
 Is king of Sicily?

Fern. Charles of Anjou.

Pro. That's false

Again! Charles of Anjou is an usurper
 And not a king!—not king of *Sicily*.
 Manfred was slain in battle, was he not?

Fern. He was.

Pro. He was! He died as became a king
 Defending his own crown against the robber
 Who wrench'd it from his brow. You answer well!

You know your country's history ! What next ?
 Who follow'd in the strife ? Who struggled next
 With the arch felon ?—held his throat to him—
 For it was nothing else, with powers so broken—
 Ere he would tamely be a looker-on,
 And see him wear the spoil ?

Fern. Conradine.

Pro. Yes !

The chivalrous, the patriotic prince !
 He took the cause up—but he lost the day.

Fern. And, with the day, his life.

Pro. How ? Can't you tell ?

Know you, so far, the tragedy, so well,
 And do you halt at the catastrophe
 Which brings the crowning horror of the whole ?
 The prince was taken captive—taken alive—
 Whole ! without scath ! No wound, the matter, even,
 Of a pin's scratch ! Now, mark the freebooter
 In Charles of Anjou—him thou namedst now
 The king of Sicily. Mark, now, how blood
 And plunder go together, like sworn friends.
 Conradine was a captive. What had he done ?
 What Charles himself had done in such a case,
 And had a right so to have done, were he
 A saint and not a robber. Fought for the crown
 Of his forefathers ! What could Conradine
 That Charles need fear ? He was bound hand and foot.
 He was as one that's bed-ridden !—that's struck
 With a palsy ! Charles had just as much to fear
 From Conradine as from an infant in the cradle !
 What did he to him ?—He beheaded him !

Fern. 'Twas sacrilege !

Pro. 'Twas murder !—murder, sir !

Murder and sacrilege !—Conradine met the scaffold
 In his own kingdom, like a host that's butcher'd
 In his own house, by thieves ! Now mark, young man,
 How bruised, broken, lost in fortunes, still
 The noble spirit to the last bears up
 And towers above its fate. Beside the block,
 Within the axe's glare, yet would not he
 Give up his righteous cause ; but from his hand
 His gauntlet drew and flung into the space
 'Twixt him and those who came to see him die.
 "For Jesu' sake," he cried, "who loves me there,
 "Pick up my gage, and with it take the charge
 "A dying man gives with his parting breath ;
 "That he present it to that kinsman of
 "My house, who takes its rightful quarrel up,
 "And whom with all my rights I here invest !"
 I see the story somewhat touches thee.

Fern. I never heard it told so true before.

Wast thou a stander-by ?

Pro. I was. What then ?

Fern. Didst thou pick up the gage ?

Pro. Wouldst thou have done it ?

Fern. I would !

Pro. And wherefore ?

Fern. Out of pity for
That murder'd king.

Pro. What !—Given thy private cares,
Hopes, havings, up, to consecrate thy life
To his most desperate cause ?—his throne usurp'd !
His land o'errun ! his people scatter'd, that
Together not so many hung as one
Might call a broken troop !—so seeming-lost
A cause, as that, at cost so dear, hadst thou
Embraced, and ta'en the gauntlet up ?

Fern. I had !

Pro. [*Taking a glove from his breast.*] There 'tis ! There !—
as I pluck'd it from the scaffold foot !
The look that martyr cast upon me then !
It shed more healing unction on my soul,
Than thought of thousand masses, at my death,
Could do, each chanted by as many lips,
And all of holy men. Now mark how Right,
Although, at setting out, a dwarf in thews,
By holding on, will gather sinew, till
It moves that giant Might ! With seconding
Levies, munitions, allies, subsidies—
None other than this empty glove, I went
From Sicily ; where now I stand again,
With monarchs and their kingdoms at my back,
The sworn abettors of the righteous hand,
Which fleshless, tendonless, reduced to bone,
Its holy cause thus clothes with life again,
And arms with retribution. That same hand
Once fill'd this glove, which now I hold to thee.
Take it !

Fern. For what ?

Pro. To swear by it.

Fern. The oath ?

Pro. Death to the Gaul, whoe'er he be, that now
Has footing in the land !—Death without pause
Of ruth—Eye, ear, be stone to voice or look
Of deprecation ! Once your blade is out,
While there's a tyrant's heart to lend a sheath,
Ne'er to resume its own !

Fern. An oath like that
I will not take.

Pro. Thou wilt not ? Thou'rt a traitor !

Fern. Ha !

Pro. Thou'rt a coward !

Fern. [*Drawing.*] Try if I fear death !

Pro. Death is a little thing to brave or fear.

Except the thought of the after-reckoning,
 The which to fear becomes, not shames a man.
 'Tis but a plunge and over, ta'en as oft
 By the feeble as the stout! Give me the man
 That's bold in the right—too bold to do the wrong!
 Not bold as that, thou art a traitor still
 And coward!

Fern. Draw!

Pro. For what?—to pleasure thee?
 To place myself on base equality
 With one whom I look down upon?

Fern. Or draw,
 Or I shall spurn thee!

Pro. Villain, to thy knee!

Fern. My knee!

Pro. What!—Fear'st thou degradation? How
 Can *he* crouch lower than he does who kneels
 To his own weaknesses, when Duty bids him
 Stand up, and take the manly post, becomes him,
 At the side of Virtue? Were thy mother—she
 That bore thee in her womb—in fetters, how
 Wouldst deal with those that put them on? Wouldst talk
 And laugh with them—shake hands with them—embrace
 them?

“Thou wouldst not!” But I tell thee, slave, thou wouldst;
 For what's thy country, be she not thy mother,
 And like a mother loved by thee? Thou slave,
 That seekest kindred with thy country's foes!
 Hast thou a father?

Fern. Draw!

Pro. Hast thou a father?

Fern. But with my sword's point will I answer thee!

Pro. Hast thou a father, boy?

Fern. Hast thou a hand?

Behoves that it be quick, and seek thy sword!
 Thy life's in danger!

Pro. Hast thou a father, still
 I say to thee?

Fern. Thy sword, or I'm upon thee!

Pro. Then wilt thou have a murder on thy soul;
 For from my stand I will not budge an inch,
 Nor move, so far, my arm to touch my sword,
 Until thou answer'st me. Hast thou a father?

Fern. [*Bursting into tears.*] No,—no! thou churlish, harsh,
 remorseless man—

That bait'st me with thy coarse and biting words,
 As boors, abroad, let loose unmuzzled dogs
 Upon a tether'd beast!—my arm withheld
 By thy defencelessness, that hast defence,
 At hand, but will not use it—Who art thou
 To use me thus?—to do me shameful wrong
 And then deny me means to right myself?

What have I done to thee to use my heart
 As if its strings were thine to strain or rend !
 Thou mak'st my veins hot with my boiling blood,
 And not content, thou followest it up,
 Mine eyes inflaming with my scalding tears,
 Thou kindless, ruthless man ! Hast thou a father ?
 I never knew one !

Pro. [*Aside.*] I thank Heaven !

Fern. Thou hadst
 A father—hadst a father's training—O
 How blest the son that hath ! O Providence,
 What is there like a father to a son ?
 A father, quick in love, wakeful in care,
 Tenacious of his trust, proof in experience,
 Severe in honour, perfect in example,
 Stamp'd with authority ! Hadst such a father ?
 I knew no training, save what fostering
 Gave me, in charity ; and was bestow'd
 Like bounty to a poor dependent ; which
 He might take or leave. Those who protected me
 Were masters of my native land, not sons.
 How could I learn the patriot's lofty lesson ?
 They told me Sicily had given me birth,
 But then they taught me, also, I was son
 To a contentless and ungracious mother.
 And they were kind to me ! What wouldst thou have
 Of a young heart, but what you'd ask of wax—
 To take the first impression given to it ?
 Except that, unlike wax, it is not quick
 What once it takes to render up again.

Pro. [*Aside.*] O, my poor boy !

Fern. If thou hadst such a father,
 'Twas cruel, knowing that thou wast so rich,
 To taunt me, where, knew'st not that I was poor,
 Thou mightst at least suspect my poverty.
 How had I loved my father ! He had had
 The whole of my heart ! I would have given it him
 As a book to write in it whate'er he would !
 I never had gainsaid him—never run
 Counter to him. I had copied him, as one
 A statue of the rare and olden virtue,
 In jealous, humble imitation.
 I had lived to pleasure him. Before I had
 Disgraced him, I had died !

Pro. [*Aside.*] My son ! My son !

Fern. Thou weep'st ! Why ?—Why ?

Pro. Thou wast made captive in
 A storméd hold.

Fern. I was.

Pro. That hold belong'd
 To John of Procida.

Fern. It did.

Pro. 'Twas storm'd
And taken, in his absence.

Fern. So 'tis said.

Pro. That John of Procida had then a son
Just four years old.

Fern. That age was mine, I have heard,
When first the Governor adopted me.

Pro. There was no other child within the castle.

Fern. Was there not?

Pro. No!

Fern. I must have been that child!

Pro. Upon his right fore-arm he bore a mark.

Fern. Yes; here!

Pro. Yes; in the very place thou point'st to.

Fern. I am the son of John of Procida!

Pro. Thou art!—and I am John of Procida.

Fern. [*Falling on his knee.*] Father!

Pro. My son! My boy! My child I left
At four years old and thought was dead!

Fern. Thou own'st me?

Pro. Own thee!—Ay!—Look at me and tell me, boy,
Dost thou not see thy father?

Fern. Yes! Thy looks
Are words of love that call me, from thy feet,
Up to thy arms.

Pro. Up to them, then!

Fern. [*Rising, and throwing himself into the arms of*
PROCIDA.] My father!

Pro. O, my son!

Fern. What shall I do?

Pro. What mean you?

Fern. What shall I do?
Give me the glove!

Pro. My son!

Fern. The gauntlet of
The martyr king!

Pro. There!—Stop! Not now, my son:
I find thee quick in the affection
Thou owest me; and which, like a rich spring
Just struck, in ample volume bubbles high,
And runs a rapid stream! Not yet, my son;
I will not take advantage of the burst
To let it hurry thee along with it.
A sudden change and violent, is scarce
A lasting one. Thou mightst repent it. No;
I'll prove thee ere thou join'st the holy cause.
Thou to Messina shalt return once more,
Before thou see'st her free. My word was given.
Thou art a man. Men that uphold the name
Act, not from impulse, but reflection.
Declare thy meditated nuptials things
Thy duty to thy neighbour and thy God

Compels thee to abandon ; then come back,
With every let removed, and take the oath ;
And live the son of John of Procida.

Fern. When I can say thy first behest is done,
I'll show myself to thee. Farewell!

[*Goes out.*]

Pro. Farewell !
How suddenly his visage brighten'd up,
At mention of returning to Messina.
What speed is there ! Is't all on *my* account ?
Now he is gone, my heart misgives me. What
Have I done ! Why do we pray that we be spared
Temptation, but that 'tis a whirlpool, which,
Once we're within its vortex, draws us in,
Charybdis like, and sucks us down to ruin !
Should I call him back ? I will ! He is out
Of hearing ! Should his love for her be strong ?
I did not note if she was very fair.
But souls were never made for eyes to read,
And there lies woman's beauty ! If she loves
Strongly—and O how strongly woman loves—
The force of two hearts must he struggle with !
I'll trust in Heaven ! Alas ! how many trust
In Heaven, and, all the while, betray themselves !]
If he's my son !—I talk with fifty years
For counsellors ! O, it was oversight,
Preposterous in a father ! If I have found
My son to lose him—best I ne'er had found him !
Yet ere I lose him I will risk my life—
Risk all—except the sacred cause I'm pledged to. [*Goes out.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Isoline's Chamber.*

Enter GOVERNOR and ISOLINE.

Gov. Thus, save the nature of the grievous wrong
Which on my conscience weighs—which, to repair
I to Fernando would have wedded thee,
Will wed thee still, comes he to claim thy hand—
Of all have I possess'd thee—who he is ;
The mortal enmity his father bears me ;
The public foe join'd to the private one ;
His hatred of our race, love for his own ;
Devotion to the dynasty, held sway
In Sicily, ere France supplanted it !
Hopes to make head again ; efforts, intrigues
With foreign powers to raise up foes to France.
That he whose presence stopp'd the rites to-day,
May act in concert with the Procida,

Though past the scope of probability,
Lies within that of chance; for though Fernando
Knows not his parentage, yet accident
May have reveal'd the son to Procida.
View then these nuptials thus. If solemnized,
Joy not without regrets—if frustrated,
Regrets with yet their solaces.

Iso. I will, sir.

Gov. Do so; and so good night. Another word.
Set not thy heart on seeing him again;
He never may return. Or, say he should,
Expect him to depart and come no more.
You mark?

Iso. I do, sir.

Gov. Now good night again.

[*Goes out.*]

Iso. What, Marguerite!—Come hither, Marguerite.
Hast done it? [*To MARGUERITE, who enters.*]

Mar. He is in the oratory.

Iso. I thank the holy man. He will remain there?

Mar. Ay, madam.

Iso. He was ever good to me!
Fernando *will* return to-night—I know
He will. My heart assures me that he will,
And lovers' hearts a strange foreknowledge have,
Though read they not the stars. That's he! Go, look!
[*MARGUERITE goes out.*]

O, that this hour were past! Alas, 'tis thus
We wish us ever nearer to our graves,
With fear of this, and with desire for that;
Flying from one thing, following another,
As rushing from the very thing itself
For which we pray, towards that we pray against!
Knew I the moment—ay, the very moment
I wedded him—I should be spouse to death;
Away with life! at once, he should be mine!

Enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. 'Tis not Fernando.

Iso. Keep upon the watch. [*MARGUERITE goes out.*]
He shall be mine! Shall private enmities,
On others' parts, set bars 'twixt those that love?
Make of two hearts, grown one, two hearts again
Distinct and alienate? or rather—for,
Judging mine own Fernando's heart by mine,
That can't be done—untwine two lives, which love
Has drawn together till they grow like tendrils,
Knotted and interwreathed, that without bruising
You cannot part them—maybe killing them?
It should not be, and shall not! Now the chances?
No let can I divine to sway Fernando,
Except that father, yet he knows not of;
And whom, new found, new feelings welcoming,

Will, at the moment, large surrender make,
 Haply at cost of love itself! What then?
 Love that is steadfast brooks not sacrifice.
 It may submit awhile; but, in the end,
 It ever claims its own—the paramount
 Of all affections! So, his love, at first
 O'ercome, anon will vindicate itself.
 Whereto no weak retreating, no false shame
 On the part of mine, shall offer hindrance to me,
 From giving't all my help.

Enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. I hear a step.

Iso. Go see if it be his. [*MARGUERITE goes out.*] Why
 should I blush

To claim my love's due right? Is love a thing
 To blush for?—Love!—the choicest of all
 The household pure affections, things of truth
 And piety next what we owe to Heaven!
 Love that makes friendship poor—that mocks enhancement—
 Itself possession endless!—that's example
 Of loyalty!—its master better served
 Than monarchs on their thrones, his throne himself!
 That more abounds in sunshine of content,
 Than destiny, in clouds, to quench the light.
 Whole in itself! Love, that is chastity
 'Fore that of vestal perfectness!—the world
 For choice, yet one with leave of Heaven selecting
 And giving all beside to negligence!—
 As the refiner the alloy, when once
 He finds the extracted gold. He shall be mine!
 The maid, that's not stanch stickler for her love,
 Hath little on't to strive for. *She* may smile
 Scornful good-bye, and turn upon her heel;
 Forget and love again; or think she does—
 For by the love I feel, she knows not love;
 My love's a heap takes all my heart to hold,
 As rich as large, and shan't be cast away!

Re-enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. 'Tis he!—I beckon'd him. He follows me.

Iso. Take stand behind the hanging stealthily,
 And there keep watch. And ever recollect
 You are mine honour's sentinel, and bound
 To let thine eye no parley hold with sleep,
 So much as e'en a wink. As open as
 Your eye, your ear; to note whate'er may pass,
 And in thy memory to book it down,
 And faithfully; for, on some syllable
 May something hang, which in esteem I hold
 Next to my soul's salvation! Quick! He comes.
[*MARGUERITE hides.*]

Enter FERNANDO.

Iso. [*after a pause*]. Fernando, art thou there?

Fern. Ay, Isoline.

Iso. Art thou indeed?

Fern. I am.

Iso. I note thee speak,
Yet can't believe thee there.

Fern. Why?

Iso. Why, Fernando!

If but the morning, noon, or afternoon,
Withdrew thee from me; when thou camest again,
Thine eyes would melt, thy breath grow scant, thy cheek
Turn pale and red; and I was ever met
Like new-found, wondrous treasure! Yesterday
It had been so.—What hath befallen to-day
To make it look so utterly unlike
Its happy fellow? Dost not joy, Fernando,
To see me?

Fern. Joy!—Ay, as the mariner
To see the day, o'erta'en by storm at night,
But knows 'tis vain, his vessel foundering!

Iso. Explain thy speech, my love.

Fern. He was a friend

Who took me hence, a most dear friend, although
One that I wot not of until to-day,—
None other than a father, Isoline!

Iso. Thou hast found a father?

Fern. I have found a father!

And with that father I have held such converse
As hath transform'd me so—except my love—
I should not know myself; and being thus
Dissimilar to him this morning was
Thy bridegroom; from this night—that should have been
Our bridal-night—all days and nights to come
Am nothing to thee thou mayst name, except
A merchant sailor for his argosie,
That holds possession of the rock whereon
She struck and went to pieces!

Iso. We must part!
Lovest thou me still, Fernando?

Fern. Yes!

Iso. As ever?

Fern. As ever!

Iso. Then, we do not part, my friend!

Fern. Is't Isoline that speaks?

Iso. Yes! Isoline!

The very maid thou know'st so call'd—a maid,
So chary of her virgin sanctity,
Thee, her betrothed—thee, her almost espoused,
She challenges to tell the moment, only,
She gave thee license, she would bar thee name,

Or blush to hear thee do so. Lo, the strait
 She is in!—at such an hour—in such a place
 To parley with thee, and the argument
 Her grievance—thy default—default in love!
 In love, Fernando!—thy default in that,
 Wherein that she fell short was the reproach
 Thou wou'st to urge against her, to the day
 The very hour she gave thee slow consent
 To lead her to the priest.

Fern. Heaven witness!—

Iso. Peace!

No words—save such as make reply to questions.
 We part—why? Lies the reason at my door?
 Am I to blame? Then fit we part! If not,
 It is not fit! I have no right to suffer.
 Suffer, Fernando!—Did you hear me?—Heavens!
 The boon, with showers of tears and gusts of sighs
 You won from me, I call it suffering,
 To find you would not take! But I'm a woman,
 Strong in the faculty your nobler sex
 Advance large claims to, with most poor pretensions—
Once cleaving, cleaving still. We shall not part.
 You think to leave me! Try! The cement, that
 Becomes a portion of the things it joins,
 So that as soon you tear themselves apart
 As them from it, not more tenaciously
 Keeps hold than I! Piecemeal they may disjoin us,
 But perfect, never!

Fern. Isoline!

Iso. Fernando!

When I consented to become thy wife,
 I gave myself to thee. A thousand rites
 Not more had made me thine. I was thy wife
 That very hour—that very minute! All
 Ties of reserves, heeds, other interests,
 That held my heart from thee I snapp'd at once,
 And like a woman gave it thee, entire!
 Whole and for ever!—ay, so gave it thee,
 Were I and all my race in slavery,
 And it, the ransom, which, on paying down,
 The shackles would fall off—gall as they might,
 They must remain. I could not take it back,
 Not even if I would.

Fern. Nay, Isoline!

Iso. Nay, hear me out, Fernando. There is a ward
 By nature set o'er the true woman's heart,
 Undream'd of by thy sex, except the few
 Of the true manhood, that contemplate them
 With delicate regards. Without that ward
 Woman is won and lost, and lost and won,
 As oft we see; but, with it, won—lost never;
 Though won unworthily—a contradiction,

Yet proof of her pure nature! which, it seems,
Falls to thy lot to test. You are, here, to take
The oath, I vow'd to take along with thee.

Fern. I cannot take it.

Iso. Cannot! You have a voice
And organs apt to frame it into speech,
Most pliant ones, as I can testify!

Fern. I may not take it.

Iso. May not! What are you?
What are you, sir! a ward, or a free man
Acting his part upon his own account—
Upon his own responsibility?

Fern. I may not for *thy* sake.

Iso. For my sake, sir!
The sand of the very hour you gave me leave
To look to myself, is running still!—not half,
Nor quarter out! For shame, to wrong me first,
And then to mock me!

Fern. I must take an oath—

Iso. When?—where?—to whom? No matter! You were
bound

To me, before, to take an oath—and shall—
And judge me worthily as you're a man!
But that I have a title to thy hand—
But that 'tis mine, upon the warranty
Of Earth and Heaven, that heard thee say 'twas mine—
Brought it the wealth and power of all the thrones
That glitter on the earth, and I could have it
By only asking for it—ere I could speak
The word, I'd choke, blacken before thee, fall
A corpse at thy feet!

Fern. Now let me speak! To wed thee
Is wedding thee to misery!

Iso. Content;
I will wed misery.

Fern. My Isoline,
Thou wouldst ally thee to a house, the foe
Of thee and all thy race!

Iso. Unto that house
Will I ally myself.

Fern. The consequences!

Iso. Be they the worst, I am prepared for them.
I'll take them all on mine own head.

Fern. The strife that's sure to come!—Man as I am, my soul
Sickens to think on't.

Iso. Woman as I am,
I dare it to come on.

Fern. Rivers of blood
Will flow!

Iso. They are welcome, though my veins be breathed
To help the flood.—Redeem your promise, sir!

Fern. O, Isoline! By this dear hand—

Iso. Hold off!

In the relation wherein now we stand,
I will not suffer even touch from thee!
Nor shalt thou trifle with me—for to speak
Or act, save to the point, is only trifling.
Here—in the oratory—close at hand,—
Attends the holy man, whose offices
You craved, this morning, and, at my entreaty,
Though strangely summon'd, hardly would forego.
Follow me to him! Take my hand before him!
Plight with me troth for troth!—or here remain
Till night gives up her watch to day, and then,
Departing hence, to crown thy bounty, leave me
A spotless maiden with a blasted name!

Fern. Thou couldst not dream of such perdition, and
To bring it on thyself!

Iso. Men cannot dream
What desperate things a desperate woman dreams,
Until they see her act them!

Fern. Desperate!

Iso. Yes, desperate! Sweet patience! Men go mad
To lose their hoards of pelf, when hoards as rich
With industry may come in time again!
Yet they go mad—It happens every day!
Have not some slain themselves? Yet if a maid—
Who finds that she has nothing garner'd up
Where she believed she had a heart in store
For one she gave away—is desperate,
You marvel at her! Marvel!—when the mines
Of all the earth are poor as beggary
To make her rich again! Am I ashamed
To tell thee this?—No!—Save the love we pay
To Heaven, none purer, holier, than that
A virtuous woman feels for him she'd cleave
Through life to. Sisters part from sisters—brothers
From brothers—children from their parents—but
Such woman from the husband of her choice
Never!—Give me the troth you promised me.

Fern. Never didst thou reflect that I was born
In Sicily?

Iso. I know thou'rt a Sicilian.

Fern. Didst ne'er reflect upon it?

Iso. To what end
Should I reflect?

Fern. To spurn me as a man
Devoid of honour!

Iso. Who dares call thee so?

Fern. He who dares speak the truth. Thou know'st—thou
must—

The wrongs my country suffers!

Iso. Yes: I know

She suffers wrongs. I have wept for them, Fernando.

Fern. Have you?—Have you wept for them? I have heard
them

Without a tear! Am I a man of honour?

Iso. What good were it to weep?

Fern. None—but to feel

As you could weep—and then, with manlier thought,

Let fiery revenge instead of pity

Start into your eye and look the wronger dead!—

That—that were good. It were becoming, too,

In one who owes his birth to Sicily.

I have not done so! O, I have play'd a part

Most mean and spiritless!—Have proffer'd smiles

Where it behoved me to hurl frowns!—exchanged

Kind speech for curses, and griped hands with men,

With whom, had I clash'd daggers, I had done

The proper thing! What must men think of me?

Is there a lip I know, which, did it speak

The heart of the owner, would not curl at me?

O, shame!—to be despised! regarded as

A thing, the man who understood himself

Would use his foot to!—to despise one's self!

That's it! The scorn of all the world beside

I could endure, had I my own respect;

But that is lost. No man can call me worse

Than I behold myself.

Iso. Fernando—

Fern. Nay!

Suffer me speak, for it relieves my heart!

And as you love me—which I know you do—

Do not gainsay me! I am a wretch more fit

To die than live!—and yet not fit to die!

For of all sins that on their heads men bear,

The heaviest, because the instrument

Of widest injury, are those which they

Commit against their country. I am fit

For nothing but a beacon, to point out

The rock whereon my honour suffer'd wreck,

That other men's may 'scape it.

Iso. Was that rock

Thy love for me?

Fern. Love?—Love?—What do I know

Of love? Where is the love I ought to bear

My country? Love?—It is a holy passion!

Generous!—exalted!—with integrity,

Lasting, as adamant!—He can know nothing

Of love like that who does not love his country!

Iso. Lov'st thou not me?

Fern. Old Angelo Martini!

Iso. Lov'st thou not me?

Fern. Angelo, my old master,

Who taught me how to guard a life, and take one,

Was murder'd yesterday, because he slew

A miscreant—the foulest in the list
 Of Infamy's pernicious sons!—was hunted
 Like a wild beast that's from a thicket sprung
 By dogs, and chased for sport! I might have saved him,
 And didn't!—Why?—Because my heart was rotten!
 I owed him manly knowledge—kindness—love.
 He loved me as his son. I suffer'd them
 To hunt him!—worry him to death! I did.
 Am I a man at all?

Iso. Lovest thou not me?

Fern. Ay, Isoline, as much
 As such a wretch can love!—Love thee?—I do,
 And holily—if holy thing can dwell
 In most unhallow'd habitation. Love thee?
 How dare I love thee? Temple as thou art
 Of tenderness, of chastity, and truth;
 Truth most ingenuous! Is it thy arms
 I should aspire to?—Thine, my Isoline!
 Whose foot ne'er spurn'd from thee a thing, so base,
 As that which now, in utter misery,
 I cast before it. *[Dashing himself upon the ground.]*

Iso. Rise, Fernando, rise,
 My lord—My love! What has afflicted thee
 To this severe extremity? Fernando!
 Thou scarest me! This passion hath no reason!
 'Tis wantonness of frenzy!—Dost thou hear me?
 If not thyself, dear love—consider me!
 That's right!—that's kind!—Give me thy hand and rise.
 I dream'd not this. Thank Heaven you're calmer! O
 I thought I loved thee all that I could love,
 But now I find my love, disdaining bounds,
 Is endless and unfathomable. Now
 I find I loved thee but a little, and
 With that remain'd contented; never dreaming
 How misery endears, and what a heap
 Of love was yet to come in company
 With thy affliction. What shall I do for thee!
 I am thy bane—a blight—a canker to thee!
 Shall I die? *[Plucks a dagger from his girdle.]*

Fern. Hold!—Stop!—Nay, let my dagger go!

Iso. You have griped hands, you said, with those with whom
 You ought to have clash'd daggers, and 'twas done
 For me!—Don't hurt me, dear Fernando! There!
[Lets go the dagger.]

Fern. Are you mad?

Iso. No!—Calm as you are—you shall see.

[Goes to the door and throws it open.]
 The door is free!—The first, the last embrace!
 And go!

Fern. Part?—Never! Thou art in my arms!
 Thou shalt not leave them but for the embrace,
 Succeeds the knot, that makes us one for ever!

Come woe!—come death!—come every kind of bane!
 Thou pattern of devotion! Thou true woman!
 Thou ruby worth a mine, and fitly set!
 Which is the way?—Where bides the holy man?
 Is that the portal to the oratory?
 What means thy cheek by dropping on my breast?
 Does it say “Yes?”—Hold up, mine own dear love,
 And come along. We’ll kneel to Heaven to-night,
 And trust to it for to-morrow.—Come, love, come.

[*They go out.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter LE CLERC *and* FRANCOIS.

Fran. Is this a bridal feast, where all seem glad
 Except the bride and bridegroom? Do you note
 Their looks?

Le Clerc. I do; and might I read thereby
 Their hearts, I should infer them ill at ease.

Fran. When were their nuptials solemnized?

Le Clerc. Last night,
 And very privately. You did not know—
 You are but new arrived from Syracuse?

Fran. Only in time to see the festival,
 If I may call it so, in honour of them.

Le Clerc. You know not then their nuptials were appointed
 For yesterday—were on the very eve
 Of taking place; nor what prevented them?

Fran. No.

Le Clerc. This way, then, and I shall tell you. Here
 Are company might interrupt us. Come! [*They go out.*]

Enter MARTEL *and* AMBROSE.

Mar. Abstraction half so deep ne’er saw I yet
 In one so high in favour with good fortune!
 Excess of happiness, like that of grief,
 Will palsy feeling, till the owner seems not
 To know how hugely blest he is; but still
 Some token shows the nature of the lapse;
 Here, none. Within the table’s breadth of him
 I sat, and mark’d him. ’Twas not feasting, sir;
 He seem’d as he were jealous of the viands,
 Like one upon his guard ’gainst poison’d meats.
 He did not eat, but taste; while, at his side,
 His bride—whose eyes, purveyors never weary
 Of catering for their lord, kept ranging still
 The table over, to select for him
 Whate’er was daintiest—with busy lips,

Like pages who their errands blushing tell,
Commended to him ever and anon
The well-selected cheer, but all in vain.

Amb. I craved his leave to pledge him in a cup.
He took the cup; but straight its use forgetting,
Began to pore upon the rich contents:
Then, as a thing one does mechanically,
Raising it to his lip, without the due
And custom'd courtesy, he tasted it
And set it down again.

Mar. Remark'd you not
How strainingly he fix'd upon the door
His eyes, whene'er it chanced to open, as
He look'd for one to enter, he had rather
Should keep away?

Amb. That struck me very much,
And brought to mind the unwelcome visitor,
Whose errand stopp'd his nuptials yesterday.

Mar. So was't with me. For him, or some one like him,
Be sure he look'd, with more of certainty
Than doubt.—The bride and bridegroom, and alone!
Let us withdraw, nor mar their privacy. *[They go out.]*

Enter FERNANDO and ISOLINE.

Fern. You are right, my love; the grape is generous,
And, used in the wise proportion, cheers the heart.

Iso. You are better!—are you not?

Fern. Much!—very much!

Iso. O, blessed union that of two makes one!
Could I, dear love, have bought the world just now
By paying down for it one hearty smile,
I must have lost the bargain, seeing thee
Without one! It was otherwise before!
How often have I smiled at that same want!
But, now, come o'er your looks the slightest cloud,
All light of mine is gone.—Fernando!—Love!
Is it not sweetest partnery?

Fern. It is.

Iso. It is, indeed, my love! Say as I do!
It is, indeed, most sweet!

Fern. Indeed, it is.

Was't not the castle portal open'd now?
I know its ponderous sound! 'Tis shut again!
It was the portal!

Iso. Whom look you for, dear love?
All your good spirits gone!

Fern. No, Isoline;
Not all of them!—not half!—not any of them!
We'll spend the evening joyously, dear love!
Out-do the god of merriment himself;
And when he's out of laughter, lend him some,
And still, ourselves, hold on! Who's there?

Enter EUGENE and Others.

Eug. My lord,
We are passing to the ball-room.

Fern. Pray pass on.
And keep the measure up!

Eug. We shall, my lord. [*Going out with others.*]

Fern. That's right; and so shall I!

Iso. So do! dear love!
For me!—your Isoline!—your bride!—your wife!

Fern. You are my wife!—The treasure of my heart
Is treasure of my arms! Who rich as I,
And says he is not happy? Then is he
Beyond the ministering of content,
And be despair his portion! I am not
A man like that.

Iso. My love, this cheer makes sad.

Fern. Makes sad?

Iso. It is not of the kind, gives cheer.
It wants a quiet.

Fern. Wants a quiet? Here
Lay on my brow this white and velvet hand
Thou gavest me yesterday.

Iso. It burns, dear love;
And yet how pale it is!

Fern. I have seen a man
In fever—and he burn'd, and yet was pale—
Pale as a corpse!

Iso. Thou hast no fever?

Fern. No.
The cup has pass'd too often to my lips—
Not much—only a time or two!—What proves
A spark to one, another finds a fire.
Don't heed it, dearest life!—O, what a hand!
What could be spared of it, or added to it?
Shape?—No! Hue?—No! Touch?—No! Does it breathe?
It does!

The airs of heaven! I will inhale them nearer!
[*Kissing her hand.*]

Iso. You flatter, dearest lord!

Fern. No, by my love!

Iso. Yea, by your love, indeed, dear lord, you do!
You are a culprit, who for witness calls
The arch accomplice that would swear him off.

Fern. By all—[*LOUIS enters.*] Ha!—'Sdeath, you tread on
tiptoe, sir,

You are at my elbow ere I think you there!

Louis. Your pardon! I was musing, sir, and thus
Moved slow. 'Tis strange! but in the ball-room, now,
One cross'd me in a mask, and made me start,
By something in his carriage and his form
Resembling one I must have met before,

But where I cannot guess. Whoe'er it be,
A feeling of mistrust that cross'd my heart,
Assures me 'twas no friend.

Fern. What? Seem'd he old
Or young?

Louis. Men's figures do not tell their years
Well as their faces do; yet would I say,
Guessing, thereby, his progress on life's road,
He stands more near the end, than setting out.

Fern. Commanding in his air?

Louis. Very.

Fern. His gait
Of most assured tread?

Louis. Yea, as he spurn'd
The ground he walk'd on. He and I have met,
But when, or where, or upon what occasion,
I can't recall, nor till I do, can rest.

Farewell, and pardon me. 'Tis very strange! [Goes out.]

Iso. [*To FERNANDO, who is lost in thought.*] Dear husband,
you conjecture something! What?

Fern. Nothing!

Iso. O, love, be honest!—It is best
Always.—If evil comes of it, at worst
We have been honest—That will comfort us.
Come!—I will show you, what I teach, I do.
I don't believe our union will be bless'd!
You start!—and you yourself assured me so,
And now I tell it you!—I don't believe it.
What then?—Do I repent our union? No!
My heart has had its wish—I am thy wife.
Knew I that I should die the very moment
The priest should bless us, and declare us one,
I had married thee and yielded up my spirit,
Thanking the gracious Heavens, most bountiful,
Which for that little moment made thee mine.
Then cheer thee, love; and be assured of this—
Were we to live the threescore years and ten,
And then to die, being what now we are,
We could not die more happy! Lose not *now*
With care for *by-and-by*, whate'er may come;
But leave't, with trust, to Heaven!

Fern. I'll do thy will!
I'll be myself!—The ball-room!—Come, love, come!

SCENE II.—A Ball-Room.

FERNANDO, ISOLINE, and Others discovered.—A Dance.

Fern. Surely the lightest, most graceful form,
And act of merriment! I'd give the world

To have the mood of him who danced just now.
 How he appear'd to poise him in the air,
 As he could hang there at his will, by which
 Alone he seem'd to come to earth again!
 He did not spring, but fly from step to step!
 With joints that had not freer play'd, methinks,
 Were hinges made of air and theirs were such!
 Yet could they plant themselves, I warrant me,
 To meet a shock! These spirits are fine things,
 Subtle as quicksilver; only they freeze
 Sooner than water; one cold breath, and ice!

Iso. Will you not dance?

Fern. No.

Iso. 'Tis expected, love,
 Upon your nuptial day.

Fern. I would not dance.

Iso. No more would I, dear love, to please myself;
 But we must help the mirth that's made for us,
 Else will it flag, and die. A feast, in this,
 Is like a fray, wherein the side is lost
 Whose leader is not foremost, cheering it.
 For my sake only! I must bear the blame,
 Seem you to lack content. They will believe
 That you repent you of your bargain, love.
 Would you like that?—What had you done a month
 Ago, had I refused to dance with you?
 How had you look'd as all the world were lost;
 Urged me again—again; at every turn
 Your voice yet more attuning to the tone
 That melts; invoking me in the dear name
 Of Pity and whate'er is kin to her.
 I had heard, in these things, marriage turns the tables,
 And she, that once was woo'd, must turn to woo,
 But little dream'd to find it out so soon.

Fern. Sweet love, we'll dance! Thy fair hand give to me,
 And, with it, give thy pardon.

Iso. There, Fernando.

A set!—A set!—The bride and bridegroom's set!
 Partners!—Your fair friends, gentlemen—A set
 To try the breath!—Ho, music there!—A strain
 Of brilliant figure!

[PROCIDA, in the dress of a cavalier, and masked,
 appears opposite to FERNANDO, who at once recog-
 nises him.]

Mar. Hear you, sirs? The bride
 Commands the dance—Your very newest strain,
 So 'tis the choicest, too. We are ready, madam,
 So please you take your place.

Iso. Fernando, what's
 The matter?—Who is he you gaze upon?
 Do you know him?

Fern. Don't you recollect him?

Iso. No—
Not in that mask. Who is he?
Fern. Never mind!
Iso. His presence troubles you! Whoe'er he is,
I'll have him straight removed.

Fern. Not for the world!
He wants me!
Iso. Let him wait till by-and-by!
I'll speak to him myself and pray him go,
And come some other time.
Fern. Stay, Isoline!
I would not for a mine thou spokest to him!
I'll speak to him myself!

Iso. Remember, love,
The dance is waiting.
Fern. Were't a king that waited,
He must, until I spoke to him that's yonder!
Where can I take him to?—to be alone?

Iso. The garden.
Fern. Right! When we have made an end,
By the west door he can depart unseen.

Iso. O, husband!
Fern. Let me have my way in this,
For I must! Look, love! Not surer to thy wrist
Is knit thy hand than I am knit to thee!
They cannot sever us, but I must perish!
So now, no let, love, if you value me!

Iso. Our friends, who look for us—
Fern. He looks for me!
Women, they say, are at invention quick—
Prove it so now, and never more was need;
And be my sweet apologist. [Crosses to PROCIDA.
Say naught,

But follow me!
[PROCIDA and FERNANDO disappear among the Company.

Iso. Your pardon, friends, I pray you.
One, in some case of keenest urgency,
That needs my husband's presence, takes him hence.
Pray you proceed. I'll play the looker-on
Till he repairs his fault to you and me,
Taking his promised place. The music, there!

A Dance.

Louis. [Entering hastily.] Break off the dance!—an enemy
is here!
Lady, I have recall'd the name of him
Whose presence struck me so unwelcomely—
A foe, the subtlest and most powerful
That France could find in Sicily! When, lately,
On mission from the king I was sojourning
At the court of Spain, came thither a Sicilian
With charges foul 'gainst France, and praying aid

To second some great blow, he said, the friends
Of Sicily meditated. That same man
Is he whose presence like an apparition
Just now oppress'd me, as I told you—his name
Is John di Procida! I have alarm'd
The guard; apprised your father of his danger,
And search is now on foot, which all must join.

*[The Company at once disperse in various directions—
occasionally passing to and fro in the back-ground.]*

Iso. Ambrose!—Le Clerc! Sirs, you are men of honour.
You know me, too, a woman of that kin.
You'll do my bidding, whatsoe'er it is?

Amb. and Le Clerc. Yes; by these tokens.

[Kissing the hilts of their swords.]

Iso. Good sirs, follow me!

[They go out.]

SCENE III.—*The Garden of the Castle.*

Enter PROCIDA and FERNANDO.

Fern. Now, sir, your will with me?

Pro. That's right! I am glad

Thou darkest not call me father! 'Tis a sign
Thou hast a sense of shame, and that's a virtue,
Although a poor one, fitter far to weep at
Than smile at. You have done your father's will?
You are ready for that oath?

Fern. I'll not deny
My disobedience, sir.

Pro. You'll not deny?

You can't!—You have married her! Yet, if my son,
Though in the one engagement thou hast fail'd,
Thou, yet, wilt keep the other.

Fern. Take that oath?
I cannot now!

Pro. You can!—You ought!—You shall!

Fern. I am a man, sir!

Pro. Ay? What kind of one?

Fern. May be a weak one; yet I dare abide
The issue of my weakness, and I will.
Not breaking trust with those, it has misled
To knit their fates to mine.

Pro. You call this manhood?

Ay, in a man not worth the name of one!
How darkest thou prate of keeping trust to me,
With whom thou hast so vilely broken trust?
So lately, too! Thou promisedst yesterday
To bring me back my son to me! Where is he, sir?
Why must I come to seek him, and, instead,
Behold a recreant!

Fern. Better, sir, we part,

Than hold discourse on terms unequal thus,
That I must bear, alone, and you inflict.

Pro. No! We won't part! You come along with me!

Fern. Never!

Pro. As you're my son, I'll have it so!

Fern. I'll not forsake the woman of my soul,
Who to my bosom hath herself surrender'd.
Come woe! Come shame! Come ruin! True to me,
I'll not forsake her! Yea, come death, I'll clasp her
Long as my breast can heave!

Pro. You think this manhood
Again? Sir! 'tis not what a man dares do,
Nor what's expected from him by a man,
But what Heaven orders him to do,—'tis that
He should do. Heaven expects we keep its laws;
May we make league then with the foes of Heaven?
Or having made it, may we keep it? No!—
Else we shall forfeit heaven! This base alliance
Is even such a league. Break it!

Fern. No!

Pro. No?—

Listen, degenerate boy! I'll tell thee that,
In tearing which from me thou dost as bad
As though my breast thou shouldst rip open, and
Pluck out my heart alive! You never knew
A mother?

Fern. I remember there was one
Upon whose breast I used to lie.

Pro. 'Twas she.

She had a mother's breast—the heart, within,
Becoming its fair lodge—adorning it
With all the sweet affections of her sex,
And holy virtues that keep watch for them!
Thou art like her! Dost thou mark? Thou art like her now;
And so, I saw thou wast, upon her lap;
A little baby looking up at her!
Thou wast her first child, and her only one!
Thou mayst believe she loved thee!

Fern. Does she live?

Pro. No; did she live, I were not now, perhaps,
Debating with thee. Thou hadst granted her
What thou deniest me. Wouldst thou behold her?
Look here! Was that a woman?

[Drawing a miniature from his breast.]

Fern. O, how fair!

Pro. Was that a woman?

Fern. Yes!

Pro. No, boy! She was
An angel!

[Putting up the miniature.]

Fern. Let me look again!

*[PROCIDA holds it to FERNANDO, who takes it, and
after looking at it, is about to kiss it.]*

Pro. Forbear !
 Thou shalt not kiss it ! No, nor breathe upon it !
 There is contact on thy lips, at thought of which,
 Had she survived the ruin of my hold,
 And now were living, that sweet face, thou seest
 The limning of, had to the 'haviour turn'd
 Of deadly loathing !—of black horror !—aught
 That's removed farthest from that smile of Heaven !
 Had any mock'd that face, what were he to thee ?

Fern. An enemy !

Pro. Had any smitten it ?

Fern. I had lopp'd his hand off, and then smitten him
 To the heart !

Pro. Had any brought the blush upon it—
 The burning blush which innocence endures,
 Compell'd by him who does a deed so damn'd
 That murder spurns it, will not bide with it ?

Fern. I had hack'd him limb from limb !—slain him by inches !

Pro. Thou hadst !

Fern. I had !

Pro. Back to the castle, then ;
 To the room I brought thee from, the festal room,
 Where for thy nuptials they keep holiday,
 And when thou meet'st the master of the mirth,
 The Governor—the father of thy wife—
 Him thou art now a son to—tell him—mark me !
 Tell him—that very—that identical man—
 He was the miscreant, to thy mother did
 That very shame !—then nerve thy filial arm,
 And hack him limb by limb and inch by inch,
 As though in every atom lay the heart
 Of the accursed spoiler.—Go !—Do that,
 And then come back ; and kiss thy mother's face !

Fern. I hear, and doubt I hear.

Pro. Then list again,
 And doubt no more. 'Twas during a brief truce.
 He was my guest—a guest's a sacred thing ;
 But, if he is, a host is sacred too.
 Thy mother vied with me in ministering to him
 The rites of hospitality—and what
 Was the return ?—Such love indulged for her,
 As meditated bane of life to me !
 He did not dare to breathe it—he but look'd it !
 She saw what troubled her, and like a wife
 Perfect in honour—of herself best guardian—
 At once refused her presence on some plea
 That warded chance of quarrel, while it balk'd
 Licentiousness of opportunity.
 This when the truce was ended, told she me.
 Dost thou breathe thick ?—I do, and must take breath,
 For what's to come. You listen, do you not ?
 You look like stone !

Fern. I know not what I am !

Pro. Well ! — War again. — Where was your father ? —
Where

Behoves a loyal subject be—in the ranks
Of the king when he takes the field.—You know we lost
The day. Palermo, Syracuse, Messina,
All bent the knee to the conqueror. Was I
His subject ? No !—Was I a rebel to him ?
No !—Why then should I be proscribed ?

Fern. Proscribed !

Pro. I was so !—Keep thy wonder ! What's behind
Will want it. Through the arts of that same man—
Of him that's now thy father through thy union
With his pernicious child—was thy *own* father
Proscribed. Have patience ! His possessions cast
At the feet of a licentious soldiery
To scramble for and ravage.

Fern. Infamy !

Pro. I say again have patience. “Infamy !”
No, not at all—not worth a passing frown,
The deed's to come. My castle yet remain'd ;
That, the arch-spoiler to himself reserved
For plunder—for thy mother shelter'd there !
She was the quarry which this bird of prey
Had mark'd out for his pounce—which, when he saw
'Twas sure, he made !—swept down with ruthless wing,
When none was near to cleave him ere he struck,
Or scare him from his prey ! Do you hear a shriek ?

Fern. Sir ?

Pro. Do you hear a shriek ?

Fern. No.

Pro. Are you sure ?

Fern. I am ; for never do I hear a shriek
But my heart leaps as through my breast 'twould burst
Its way ! I cannot bear to hear a shriek !

Pro. Thou heard'st thy mother's ! as the ravisher
Waved o'er thy head his coward blade, through terror
At thy impending death, to win from her,
What, sooner than yield up, she had lost, herself,
A hundred thousand lives !—She swoon'd away !
My heart turns sick, and my brain reels ! Thy arm !—
Away ! thou worse than matricide—Thy touch
With a new horror strings my nerves anew !

Fern. Why was this tale reserved ?—not told before ?

Pro. Because I found thee apt, as I believed,
In taking up the hint of honour ; nor
Admitted fear it could be thrown away.
Life's strong in me to tell the tale and live !
How she contrived escape, to tell it me,
It matters not—the last word cost her dear—
'Twas bought with her last breath.—You come with me ?

Fern. I am a doom'd man !—My lot, on earth,

Is cast in utter misery!—For me,
Not in the wide world blooms that blessed spot
I can find comfort in!

Pro. Find Duty, boy;
And take thy chance for comfort!

Fern. I can't leave her!
Do wrong to her, did ever good to me!
I took her for all chance, and through all chance
I'll cleave to her! In cloud I wedded her,
And thunder shall not scare me from her now!
No blame is hers.—I swear that she is good.
Loves holily as heartily. Is a gem
Of crystal truth—a mine of every ore
Of excellence—a paragon of worth,
Well as a paragon of loveliness!
Is she her father's hand or foot, that you
Or I should spurn her for her father's fault?
High Heaven framed her, as it frames us all,
Not of the temper of our parentage,
But of the attributes itself vouchsafes us.
Heaven framed her to be loved—if to be loved,
Then, cherish'd!—I have sworn to cherish her—
I'll keep my oath!—I will not give her up.

Pro. Then, must I leave thee to thy fate!

Iso. [*Entering.*] Stop, sir!
You are John of Procida!

Pro. I am.

Iso. The foe
Of France; and, chiefly, of a son of hers
Who calls me child.

Pro. I am the foe of France,
And chiefly foe of him thou speakest of.

Iso. What madness brought thee hither?

Pro. Madness?—Right!
Hope of reclaiming a degenerate son,
Spell-bound by love where it behoves him loathe!

Iso. Your life's in jeopardy!—You are discover'd!
Come in there!—Gentlemen, you'll guard him safely,
And suffer none to question him or touch him;
Nor must you leave him till he is thoroughly
Beyond the reach of danger.

Pro. Gracious powers!
Do you rebuke me?—is it thus you show it?

Iso. You are my enemy—and yet my father!
Father to him—to me a dearer self!
I'll answer with my life, sir, for the safety
Of every hair of your head.

Pro. Fernando!

Fern. Sir?

Pro. Come hither!—Lady, place your hand in mine.
These hands that met, till now, against my will,
Now, with my will, I join, and add thereto

My blessing!—May I, Heaven?—I ask too late!

'Tis done!—A promise, lady!

Iso. It is given!

Pro. See that it be fulfill'd. You will repair
To-night, ere at the zenith stops the moon,
There, westward of Messina, on the coast,
Where, when the waves and winds are boisterous,
The fishermen their little fleets embay,
And, in their snug huts nestling at their ease,
Smile and grow jocund at the storm without.
You know the place?

Iso. I do—I will be there!

Pro. And so will I—and you shall find a friend!

[*They go out severally.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Bay near Messina.—The Sea.—Fishermen's Boats; in the offing a Fleet.—Moonlight.*

Enter JOHN OF PROCIDA and GUISCARDO.

Pro. You look your news! 'Tis dire, but not unwelcome,
Nor out of place nor out of season, that
Men should cry "God forbid!"—That is, *good* men.
It is the scourging, at report of which,
Men, that rely on Heaven, upon their breasts
Will cross their arms, though shuddering, and look up,
In dread, yet gratitude. Chance has outdone
Foresight; and Preparation, looking on
With idle hands, can scarce believe its eyes
To see the work, it labour'd for, fulfill'd
Almost without its aid. Tell me again
The cause and manner of the massacre;
And leisurely. What you related now
Seems like a dream, which he that has awaked from't
Tries to recall, but finds the substance vapour,
Which in the tracing of it—vanishes!
You said, the hour of the vespers?

Guis. Yes; that hour,
That annual hour religiously observed
In Sicily, our tyrants made a plea
For new and worse aggression. On pretence
Our act of piety might mask revolt,
Assembling in such numbers; though we held
Our warrants in our hands, our wives and children,
Which, who that loved them, would to strokes expose
From swords and knives in sudden tumult drawn,
Where rage might miss a foe and smite a friend?

Pro. Well, upon this pretence, orders, you said,
Were pass'd to search for arms—

Guis. O Heaven, the acts
Of an unbridled soldiery—of men
Who reckon war a game—regarding all
The charities—the tender charities
Of human life—as stakes!—Interpreting
This order by the hint of most depraved
And devilish appetite, the myrmidons
Of France presented to amazed Palermo,
O'er-acted in her streets, exposure, which
Her liberal haunts keep close—attested by
The shrieks of maids and matrons, powerless
With loathing and affright; whose friends look'd on,
Aghast with rage that knew not where to turn.

Pro. Go on!—I see it!

Guis. Know you one Venoni,
The son of Nicolo Venoni?

Pro. No;
But knew his father well.

Guis. He married lately,
And his young bride, accompanying him
To church, was thus encounter'd. Now Venoni,
That kind of spirit is endow'd with, which,
If once 'tis chafed, serves its own impulse solely,
Reckless of cost. As a high-temper'd horse
That's rashly given the spur, throws off all guidance
Save that of its own fury; spikes itself
Upon a palisade, plunges into
A flood, or dashes o'er a precipice
As soon as keep the road. With naked hand
He struck the caitiff down!

Pro. 'Twas like the son
Of his father!—'Twas well done!

Guis. How one brave man
Showing himself will make a thousand brave
That play'd the hound before! The miscreant
At once was stoned to death. His fellows, seeing,
For the first time, how, more from habitude
Than proper power, a handful sways a crowd,
To save themselves took straight to flight. And now
The uproar!—While the guard the larum beat,
The citizens—the women and their fry
Huddling into their houses, without heed
Whether their own or neighbours', and, as freely,
Such weapons snapping up as came to hand—
Trebled in numbers from the rousing cry
Of the exploit, which ran like wildfire through
The city, shouting for Enfranchisement,
Vengeance, and Freedom, towards the citadel,
Devoted, moved—one street of waving arms!

Pro. The sight appall'd their enemies!

Guis. It did!

Pro. No monster half so dire as that which meets

The eye of tyranny, when it beholds
 Its thralls make stand against it, all at once,
 While at its foot it thought them! They o'erthrew
 The garrison?

Guis. O'erthrew?—Ay, did they, sir,
 As the red flood of Etna would a wall
 With touching it. Then came the Massacre,
 'Mid yells for quarter, answer'd by despair.
 The strugglings then—the blows—the kinds of death!
 Some falling by a single stroke, and some
 By none at all but grasp of strangling horror.
 By pieces some despatch'd—gash upon gash—
 Their bodies hack'd, yet life without a wound.
 How variously they met their fate—some mad,
 Some as all sense were lapsed, some seeking it—
 Some flying from it; and with all the signs
 As the blood works in such extremity!
 Some, pale as ashes; some, with face on fire;
 Some, black as though with premature congealing!
 Here tears; there scowls; there laughter—yes, I saw
 Some that did die with laughter! Some did groan,
 Some groan'd, some shriek'd. Most died with curses. Few
 With prayers, and they were mix'd with imprecations.
 More than one wretch, thrust through and through, that
 laugh'd

With simulated bravery, masking despair!
 Not one encounter'd death with constancy;
 But most as, to its pangs, were superadded
 The sharper stings of conscience.

Pro. Heaven have mercy
 Upon their souls!

Guis. Their wives and children, now——

Pro. Don't tell me that again! I shudder still!
 The work of slaughter should have stopp'd at *them*!
 Woman and infancy have Nature's word
 Against the blows of men, whom she made strong
 For their protection! It is damage done,
 Irreparable to a righteous cause;
 Which, else, all men, contemporary with it,
 As well as all to come, had wholly lauded.
 It is a glorious page in history,
 So blotted, men will say of it, hereafter,
 As well as now, "Better it ne'er were written!"

Guis. Nay, John of Procida, that friend whose zeal
 Despatch'd me to you, and your trust in whom
 Made him the master of your hiding-place—
 For, it behoved you, being what you are,
 The friend of Sicily, like a wild beast
 To house!—that friend, with other thoughts than yours
 Beheld the work of vengeance. In the midst
 His voice was loudest, "Death to all that's French!
 Spare not—nor sex—nor age!"

Pro. I love the zeal,
But hate the excess.

Guis. Think 'twas the lava, sir;
And had it been, what then would you have said?
But, that it was the hand of Heaven, stretch'd forth,
Most righteously. For when was mercy shown,
To us or ours, by them? To say no more,
Our sisters, wives, and daughters, with their cheeks
Burning at shames, which, thought of, drives us mad,
Cried for atonement not one tittle short
Of that which we exacted! Be prepared.
Palermo marches on Messina. Not
A minute but she's nearer, by the strides
Impatient vengeance takes, with first success,
Flush'd and invigorated! You are look'd for,
As soul and limb of the enterprise. Beware,
The fire you wish to blaze, you put not out,
By damping it. For me, my sword abstains
From nothing that owns kindred with the blood
Whose pestilent poison, worse than pestilence,
Has cursed my native land! Look to yourself,
Fernando! [*Rushes out.*]

Pro. By that name they call my son!
Is he devoted? Friend!—No! Let me think!
No; better I remove him from the rage
I might in vain attempt to mitigate;
They shall depart together. Who goes there?
Francisco?

Enter FRANCISCO [a Sailor].

Fran. Yes.

Pro. You keep your time. Where lies
The boat?

Fran. In the shade of yonder jutting rock
On which the moonbeam strikes.

Pro. 'Tis well. When those,
With whom I mean to freight her, shall arrive,
I'll summon you; when they are safe bestow'd,
Pull for the fleet, right to the Admiral's ship.
Away and watch. [*FRANCISCO goes.*] Nature forebodes a shock.
She is not herself, but motionless and still,
Like one that holds his breath with strong suspense!
Etna seems dead, as though her fires were out.
At morn, I watch'd her; and, again, at noon;
At sunset, last; I could not see a reek;
No, not so much as the light gauzy wreath
Shook from the veil which vaporous night hath left,
And morning, lifting with his glowing hand,
Melts, as he touches, into viewless air!
Charybdis holds her peace and Scylla sleeps!
The welkin does not stir! A heaviness,
Stillness, and silence, all unwonted, and

Portentous, hold possession of the world
As on the eve of some dread prodigy!

FERNANDO and ISOLINE enter.

Fern. Who is there?

Pro. A friend.

Fern. My father?

Pro. Yes, my son.

You are come in time. Methinks not yet the moon
Has topp'd the hill of night. How is it, lady?
You seem to droop?

Iso. 'Tis very sultry, sir.

I never felt the like. There's not a breath.

Pro. No; not a breath, indeed. 'Tis a deep calm.
Wilt trust me, lady, as a friend?

Iso. I will!

As better than a friend—a father, sir—
The father of my husband!—By that title
In a brief hour almost as much endear'd
As he who call'd me daughter all my life!

Pro. A most sweet nature! Slaughter shall not force
The house of such a heart. Fernando!

Fern. Sir?

Pro. Anon a storm will burst upon Messina
More fierce than ever yet the elements
In wildest fury bred. Do you see a cloud?

Fern. No.

Pro. Understand me, then.

Fern. I understand you!

Pro. It brings no squall, no bolt, yon fleet need fear.
There you shall house to-night—your bride as well.

Fern. My father—

Pro. Peace!—Believe I love you, lady;
Not that I say so, but that I will show you
The deeds of love. Behoves it, though, at present,
You give me credit on my word alone,
And largely, too.

Iso. To what amount you will.
Provided, should you fail—and that, I am sure,
Would be the shame of fortune and not yours,—
My losses only light upon myself!

Pro. 'Tis frankly answer'd. Frankly, then, thus far
Give me your confidence on trust, alone,
To change, to-night, your lodging for a berth
On board a barque that rides in yonder fleet,
Whereof the chief bears me a brother's love,
Which I, alike, return. Hard by, there waits
A boat, and he that holds your hand e'en now,
And has most right to it of all the world,
Shall go along with you.

Fern. O father, thanks!

Iso. For what, dear husband? Those were hearty thanks!

Such payment waits not on small benefits.
 What heavy debt do you and I incur
 By sleeping, love, on board yon fleet to-night,
 That you acknowledge it so largely?

Fern. Nay!

Question not, sweet! but come!

Iso. Nay; by your leave,
 I'll think, a little, first. The thanks you pay
 Mind me of thanks which I myself do owe
 And ought to pay as well as you.—Did we lodge
 With a mere friend—a friend of every day—
 The common'st friend—we would not leave his house
 Without "Good-bye and thank you." I have lived
 With a good friend of mine for twenty years—
 One that still made me feel his house my own;
 As welcome to it every bit as much
 As he himself!—Should I treat such a friend
 Worse than I would a friend of every day?
 No, love.—I'll go.—But you and I must bid
 "Good-bye and thank you" to my father first.

Pro. [*Aside.*] That note now jars the tune that late ran
 sweet!

Iso. What is't offends your father, that he frowns
 And moves with step disturb'd? What angers him?
 I see! I see!—I must return to mine.

Fern. It may not be!

Iso. Nay, by your leave, it must!
 And say it must, dear love! Oh, make me not
 The thing I would not be—a froward wife.
 'Tis time enough for that—if e'er that come,
 Which, I'll be bound, 'twill never, with my will.
 I would not for a thousand thousand worlds
 Gainsay you, any time, and chiefly now,
 Just when I have paid my freedom down for you.
 Oh, be a gentle master to me, love!
 Don't overtask me, lest the duty, which
 'Twere sweetness to discharge, grows weariness,
 And I should cast the heavy burden down
 I lack the strength to bear.

Fern. This once be ruled!

Only this once, and I'll obey you, love,
 For all my life to come! Give you command,
 And try to overtask me, if you will,
 And see if I complain—much less, rebel.
 Bear with me only now!

Iso. I will not, love,
 Unless I know the reason; and when known,
 Approve of it! Husband, deal fair with me.
 Is't fit I do the thing my soul condemns?
 How may it fare with you? Is she a wife
 Who, as a daughter, fails? She cannot be!
 Duty is uniform where duty is,

And can no more with disobedience bide
Than honesty with fraud. Am I not right?
Am I the guardian of your honour, love?
Ay, before any one!—before yourself!
Then, by myself, must I approve the trust,
And make fidelity my law in all things.
I'll see my father ere I seek yon fleet,
Or know the reason why I must not see him,
And find that reason right.

Pro. Yet more and more
It turns to discords!—Girl! your husband's life
Depends on your obeying him.

Iso. Does mine?

Pro. Yes.

Iso. And my father's, too?—I'll answer—No!
I comprehend. Some storm that's gathering
Around my father, you would save me from;
And, to that end, would lead me to forsake him.
Forsake my father!—Sir, are you a father
To counsel so a child? Is this the ruin
You told me of, and would have left me to,
Fernando?—but you did not leave me!—No!—
You were mine own love still! Sir, have you rule
Over the wind that brings this thunder-cloud,
Divert it! Think how merciful is Heaven,
And copy it! My father is your foe,
But spare him—I spared you!

Pro. I would return
Your bounty, would you let me.

Iso. Could I let you,
On terms like yours, I were unworthy of it!
Plead for my father! Will you not, Fernando?
Do it!—He was a father, love, to you!

Pro. Do it, and think upon your mother, boy!
Are you a man?—The boat lies round the rock;
There stands your wife; destruction is at hand.
Seize her and snatch her from it!

Iso. If he dares!
'Twould make me hate him!—Yes, Fernando—love
Can turn to e'en as opposite a thing
As hate!—ay, in a moment!—Do not try it!

Pro. Listen, and learn the fate that threatens you,
And I would save you from! The men that were
But yesterday the spaniels of the French,
To-day are bloodhounds that eat up their masters.
Palermo knows it! Of thy country, all,
That late drew breath in her, have proved it—Man
Woman, and Child! The rule is Massacre!
And now the dogs, mad with the game of blood,
Hark hither to repeat it.—There they are!

Iso. Where?

Pro. Don't you hear?

Iso. I do!—a distant sound.

Pro. It is their yelping as they speed along
On foam with haste and fury. Save your wife!

Iso. Fernando, touch your wife and she's a corpse!
Make but the offer and she slays herself!

Which is the way?—Point out the way to me—
The way to my father!—Sirs, which is the way?

Pro. They'll intercept you ere you reach the town!

Iso. Were it the lava that came boiling on,
I'd cross it to my father!

Pro. You forget
Your husband!

Iso. He is safe—my father not:
I now am wife to danger!

Fern. Isoline!

Iso. Ha!—Yes!—There 'tis!—That light—O blessed light!
Blest though 'tis shining from a tomb!—I greet it
As never did I yet the rising sun. [*Rushes out.*]

Pro. [*Stopping FERNANDO.*] Whither, my boy?

Fern. Father, to bring her back,
Or share her fate!

Pro. Fernando!

Fern. Better die
Than live—and, honour dead—nay, manhood dead—
Still bear thy name, living of all mankind
The execration! Farewell, father!

Pro. Stop!
Embrace me ere you go!

Fern. [*Struggling with PROCIDA.*] Nay, father!

Pro. Nay,
But I *will* hold thee, boy!

Fern. She vanishes!
I have lost sight of her!—O, loose thy hold!

Pro. I cannot part with thee!

Fern. She will escape me!

Pro. What! is my strength gone from me?—Is my child
Stronger than I?—Can I believe I have dwindled
While he has grown to brawn!

Fern. [*Bursting away.*] Farewell!

Pro. He is gone!
And I am desolate in the world again!
O, the fine nature, there, that's run to waste!
Hark!—They are near the town.—Why, Procida,
Where is thy cause?—that which was wife, son, all
On earth most dear to thee? Who roused the spirit
That leads the march of death in progress, now?
Thou!—Where thy post then?—Here, or at its head,
Directing it? Forgive me, Sicily,
Forgive me, martyr-king!—and, Liberty,
Disown me not; I ever was thy son!
Away the private care! The public cause

Engross the heart, I once gave up to it,
 And now give up again! Quail, Tyranny!
 Up, Freedom!—Claim your rights—and have them, too!
[Goes off.]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Castle. Loud knocking outside, repeated two or three times.*

Enter from the opposite side AMBROSE hastily.

Amb. Give o'er!—What makes you knock so loud? Come in!
[Opens.]

Louis. [Entering.] The Governor!

Amb. He sleeps.

Louis. Awaken him!

Amb. Must I?—Till now he has not tasted rest;
 His mind distemper'd by unquiet thoughts,
 Things of no substance—visions, which his fancy
 Has conjured up to cheat his senses with.
 Gazing on air, as 'twere endued with form,
 Sinews and motion; and with silence holding
 Discourse, as it could hear, and had a tongue;
 Sleep hath but new composed him; I am loth
 To abridge her friendly visit.

Louis. Better thou
 Than death! Messina swarms on every hand
 With signs of ferment. Ere the custom'd hour,
 The citizens forsake their couches, for
 The scarcely lighted streets; and frequent pass
 From house to house, or here and there in groups
 Stand muttering to one another; while
 On our patrols, for whom they scarce make way,
 Instead of looks of deprecation, scowls
 They cast, that talk of blood as openly
 As threats of murder. Something is on foot
 Which instant harsh example may suppress,
 Where to we wait the will of the Governor.

Amb. I'll call him then,—Soft,—he is here! Observe,
 Attired as yesterday, rejecting all
 The appliances of sleep!

Gov. [Entering.] I am the dupe
 Of mine own fancy, and I know it; yet
 I am its dupe! My reason giveth way.
 I come from my own chamber, where I stood
 Just now in the hall of John of Procida!
 I knew 'twas my own chamber, yet it seem'd
 His hall; and at the further end there sat
 His wife, or else a spectre in her shape.
 She did not breathe, methought, and yet she sat
 Her chair erect, and saw; and glared at me
 Until her eyeballs froze me. I come out

Into my antechamber. I am here!—
 I am sure I am!—Still seem I standing yet
 In that abhorred hall with that companion
 Of aspect most unnatural, that makes
 My flesh to creep and breathing grow so thick
 I doubt 'tis air I draw!

Louis. He dreams, although
 He seems awake.

Amb. No—no!—He does not dream!
 It is not dreams men see with open eyes.
 This mood hath grown upon him since he heard
 Of John of Procida. My lord—my lord!

Gov. O, Ambrose, is it you? I am glad you are here.

Amb. I am, my lord; and here is Louis too,
 Who dreads some ferment in Messina. Scarce
 'Tis dawn, and yet the citizens have left
 Their beds, and throng the streets with sullen looks,
 Threatening disaster to their masters, which
 To avert, behoves we force them to keep house,
 And make, of the resisting, sharp example.

Gov. Take measures as occasion calls for them,
 Arouse the garrison. Let one and all
 Be under arms. Shed no more blood than's needed.

[*LOUIS goes out.*]

No news of John of Procida! The face
 He saw not; 'twas the figure only struck him;
 Recalling the impression of a man
 He once had seen, but where he could not tell,
 Nor who it was, till he at last bethought him
 Of John of Procida, then told his thought
 Not as a thing of doubt but certainty.
 And then the disappearance all at once
 Of him he so remark'd, was circumstance
 Corroborative. Ever since, my heart
 Hath felt a chill like that the body feels
 When cold hath smit it to the bone! so deep,
 No art medicinal can draw it out,
 And the wretch shivers at the very fire!

Amb. He is forgetful I am near him. Mark.

Gov. Hangs then my fate on John of Procida?
 My heart forebodes it does. Forebodes it right?
 If so, when he's at hand, my doom is near.
 Ha! as I live 'tis gone. Spectre and all!
 O! now I see you, Ambrose. Who comes yonder?
 Is't not Le Clerc?

Amb. I'd say it was, my lord,
 But for those marks of blood! He spent last night
 Some two miles distant from Messina.

Enter LE CLERC, supported by MARTEL and a Soldier.

Martel. Here's
 Le Clerc come wounded home. He threw himself

From his horse into our arms, and without word,
Made for the staircase, which he stagger'd up,
As if by superhuman effort, and
Made straight for your highness' chamber.

Gov. Well, Le Clerc?

What would you with me, friend? What has befallen you?
He strives to speak, but cannot. Voice is fled,
And life is following it. One word, Le Clerc.
He dies in the attempt.—Yes; he is dead!
Remove him. Good Martel, be on the alert.
Arouse our friends. Look to the citizens!

[*MARTEL and the others go out, bearing the body between them.*]

Of some dread visitation this must be
The dark, but sure, forerunner. Death is abroad.
Be sure of it. Yes, Ambrose, death is abroad!
Death!—Death!

Louis. [*Entering hastily.*] My lord, the sentinels upon
The walls hear sounds as of a multitude
Advancing on Messina. Scouts are sent;
What it behoves us look for, we shall learn
A few brief minutes hence.

Gov. Brief, do you say?
Years are not brief, and minutes now are years!
What of the citizens?

Louis. Their numbers swell.
They move in masses up and down the city,
Returning dogged silence to our orders
To clear the streets. We wait for augmentation
To drive them into their houses. List, my lord,
Our trumpets sound to arms.

Enter FRANÇOIS, conducting PIERRE, much exhausted.

Gov. Ay, lustily
They tell their need. What other spectre this?
Who is't? He is ours, and yet I know him not.
Who is't, I say?

Fran. One from Palermo, sir,
Whose speed has cost him his good courser's life
To bring unwelcome news.

Gov. What tells it, friend?

Pierre. The massacre of every living soul
Of Gallic birth or blood, that in Palermo
Drew breath the day on which I 'scaped from it,
Preserved by feigning death!

Martel. [*Rushing in.*] A whelming flood—
A whelming human flood—comes raging on
Right for Messina. Haste, sirs! Massacre
Is at our very gates. Flight is cut off.
Resistance is our only hope. Forth!—Forth!
Houses are certain tombs!

[*All go out but the GOVERNOR, who seems transfixed.*]

Gov. 'Tis Procida!
 'Tis Vengeance!—Vengeance without mercy!—fierce!—
 Implacable! On every side the sword!
 I cannot hope to live—yet cannot die!
 Flight—flight—the coward's refuge! Nothing else
 Is left me! This way leads into the street!
 The garden? Yes, it opes without the walls;
 Conscience, 'tis thou, not I!—Except for thee
 I would not quail!—The spectre here again!
 Again the hall of John of Procida!
 Away!—Flight!—Nothing else!—Away!—Away!
[*Rushes out.*

SCENE THE LAST.—*The Garden of the Castle.*

Enter ISOLINE, tottering and breathless—She leans against a tree—Sounds of tumult without, and the noise of martial instruments.

Iso. Thus far in time—thus far in safety! Were't
 Another stride, ere take it I had dropp'd.
 The work is going on! O, spare my father—
 Spare him, and deal with me! Hark! Massacre
 Has left this quarter free; within the city
 Holding her gory reign. She does not riot
 Within the castle yet. He yet may live!
 Limbs, hold me up. Don't fail me. Who comes here?
 My father!—Father! [*GOVERNOR enters hastily and wildly.*

Gov. Whosoe'er thou art,
 Stop not my way!

Iso. Dost thou not know me?

Gov. No!

In times like these men know not one another.
 Holding together, they together fall,
 As men in knots will drown. In scattering lies
 The chance of safety. Do not hold me, friend!
 Let go!—Look to thyself!—Let every one
 Look to himself. He is lost that casts his eye
 Upon another's jeopardy. His own
 Asks all his care.—Let go!—Away!—Away! [*Rushes off.*

Iso. [*Thrown upon her knees.*] He does not know me!—He's
 my father, and
 He does not know me! He's distracted—mad!
 Fain would I follow him, but cannot.—No,
 My knees refuse to raise me.

Fern. [*Rushing in.*] Isoline!

Iso. [*Springing up by a convulsive effort, and throwing herself into his arms.*] Fernando!—my Fernando!—True to death!

My husband—Mine own love!—I die for joy!
 And bless thee, my Fernando, for my death!

[*Swoons in his arms*

Fern. Love!—Wife!—Choice pattern of thy devoted sex—
My Isoline! She is dead!—she is dead!—she is dead!

Guis. [*Entering from the castle, his sword drawn.*] Fernando!

Fern. Here, Guiscardo!

Guis. Who is she

Hangs swooning on thine arm? Thy bride?

Fern. My bride!

Guis. And dead?

Fern. And dead!

Guis. Set down the carrion, then,
And yield me payment for Martini's death!

I want not odds!—I'll fight thee like a man
For ancient friendship's sake!

Fern. Fight me, Guiscardo?

Guis. Cast down thy load to earth, and draw thy sword.

Fern. Wouldst murder me?—and if thou wouldst, Guis-
cardo,

Do it at once!

Guis. I'd treat thee like a man.

Wilt thou not throw thyself thy burden down,

And act like one, or must I wrest it from thee

To balk thee of excuse?

[*Approaching.*]

Fern. You touch her not!

'Fore her dead body do I throw my life

That would not save my own!

Guis. Have at thee, then!

[*They fight ; FERNANDO is wounded.*]

And. [*Rushing in.*] Hold!—'Tis the son of John of Procida!

Guis. The son of John of Procida!

Fern. Too late!—

Take her! Preserve from insult—Pay all honours,—

For her sake, not for mine, and lay us side

By side. I pant for death, and not the life,

Would hold my spirit from rejoining hers!

[*Dies.*]

Enter JOHN OF PROCIDA.

Pro. It is not there!—I came to see his corse,

But not to smite him. No!—I would not stain

This day of freedom with the narrow deed

Of personal vengeance.—To the swords of others

I would have left him, satisfied if they

The debt exacted that was due to mine.

But they, intent on their own quarry, mine

Have suffer'd to escape, and vengeance, now

Balk'd, by its own remissness, of its prey,

Gnashes the teeth in vain!

And. Di Procida!

Pro. Ho!—Andrea! What bear'st thou on thy arm?

And. The body of Fernando's wife, although

If this be death, I much mistake its hue!

Pro. Who lies upon the ground? The Governor?

And. Thy son, O Procida!—She is not dead!
Help here!—Hold off!—You kill'd him!

Pro. Kill'd my son!

Guis. Strike, John of Procida! He sided with
The enemies of Sicily.

Pro. He did;

And he was born her son! Live!—You did right.
His father says it.—Yet, he was my son!

Guis. I knew not that.

Pro. And had you known it, still
You had done right—I say it—I—his father!
And yet he was my son!

Iso. [*Recovering.*] My lord!—My husband!—
Fernando!—draw me closer to thy breast!
Hold off!—Who art thou?—Where's Fernando?—Who
Is that?

And. Fernando's father!

Iso. So it is!

And we are safe!—Art we not, sir? [*Tottering toward JOHN.*]

Pro. O, Fate!

Iso. You will not let them murder us?—You will not!
You can't! else Nature have no truth in her,
And never more be trusted!—Never more!
If fathers will not stretch an arm to save
Their children's throats, let mothers' breasts run dry,
And infants at the very founts of life
Be turn'd to stones! Sir!—Father!—Where's your son?
Ah, you repulse me not! You let me come
Closer to you.—Where's my Fernando, father?
What! do you draw me to you?—Would you take me
Into your very bosom?—There, then!

[*Throws her arms about his neck.*]

Now,

Fernando, what's to fear?—Now, mine own love,
We shall be happy!—happy!—blessed happy!
Why don't you answer me?—Where is he, father?
I left him here! Where I have been I know not.
I recollect a sickness as of death,
And now it comes again. My brow grows chill
And damp—I'll wipe it! Blood!—What brings it here?
Whose blood is this?

And. Blood has been shed to-day.
No vestment in Messina, but you'll find
Some trace upon't.

Iso. Where is my husband, sirs?
Is this Fernando's blood?—We were together,
And it was here!—and if death threaten'd us,
He would be close to me, of his own life
Making a shield for mine! Was he alive,
Were he not here?—Not here, he must be dead!
And this must be his blood!

Pro. Remove her, friend;

Take and remove her hence. I lack the strength.
Her plight, to mine own added, weighs me down.
She must not see his body; 'tis her life
That I feel fluttering next my breast just now
As ready to take wing. 'Twere certain death
To look upon him.

Iso. [*To ANDREA.*] No, I will not hence!
They will murder me. I am safe here,—am I not?
Am I not, father? Father!—Where's my father?
He did not know me!—Shook off his daughter!
Fled from her!—You are all my father now!
But there's Fernando, too!—You are not weeping?
You are!—Don't weep!—I'll dry your eyes for you!
The blood again!

Pro. We must remove her hence.
Come with me, child.

Iso. Child!—Do you call me child?
Child is a sweet name!

Pro. Come, my daughter.

Iso. Daughter!
That's sweeter yet than child. Nothing so sweet
After the name of wife; but wife's not sweeter
Than husband.—Husband? That's the sweetest name
Of all! My husband is your son! and "son"—
There is a sweet name too!—No sweeter name
Than son! Do you not think so?

Pro. Come.

Iso. I come!
We are going to Fernando,—are we not?
Sir, fare you well. What's that upon the ground?

And. Where?

Iso. There! You know as well as I! Stand off!

[*Breaks away.*]

Fernando!—My Fernando! Dead?—Ay, dead
Indeed, when it is I that call, and thou
Return'st no answer!—My Fernando!—Dead!
Ah! it is well! Here's silence coming too
For me, love!—Yes, I feel the frost of death
Biting my limbs, and creeping towards my heart.
Colder and colder—all will soon be ice.
'Tis winter ere its time! but welcome, since
'Tis shared with you, Fernando. Mercy, Heaven,
'Tis kind—'tis pitiful to suffer me
On thy dead lips to breathe my life away.

[*Dies.*]

And. Let me conduct thee hence, O Procida!
Grief hath benumb'd his every faculty.

Steph. [*Entering with others.*] Where is John of Procida?

And. Behold him.

Steph. Health
To thee and to Messina! which, to-day,
Through thee, beholds her grievous yoke thrown off.
All Sicily is free! From north to south,

From east to west she garrisons herself,
And tyrants rule no more!

And. Forgive him that
He heeds you not. The body is his son's,
You see him gazing on!

Steph. We know his heart!

Thomaso. [*Entering with others.*] Health, John of Procida!
The enemy

That sack'd thy castle, and who yesterday
Held rule in Sicily, the Governor,
Flying from death, encounter'd it from one
Who knew him, intercepted him, and slew him.

And. All enmities, all loves, are swallow'd up
In the deep gulf of sorrow for his son.

Carlo. [*Entering with others.*] Where is our chief?

And. You see what's left of him.

Carlo. The admiral
And captains of the fleet have disembark'd
To swell the general joy; and, yonder, come
Our ancient magistrates, their offices
Suspended long, resumed, to pay their debts
To John of Procida!

Enter Magistrates, &c.

Chief Magistrate. Di Procida
The Liberator—so we hail thee—such
Thy deeds declare thee better than our words!
For us and for our children from our hands—
Whose act our sovereign master will approve—
Most poor return take for most rich desert,
And be the Governor of Sicily!

[*The whole assembly shout and applaud—JOHN OF
PROCIDA weeps.*]

Pro. Forgive me—I'm a father—There's my son!

END OF JOHN OF PROCIDA.

OLD MAIDS:

A Comedy,

IN FIVE ACTS.

TO

ROBERT DICK, ESQ.,

OF

LOCH-ARD LODGE, NEAR ABERFOYLE, BY STIRLING,

This Comedy

IS AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

October, 1841.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1841.)

<i>Sir Philip Brilliant</i>	Mr. C. MATHEWS.
<i>Master Blount</i>	Mr. F. MATTHEWS.
<i>John Blount</i>	Mr. HARLEY.
<i>Thomas Blount</i>	Mr. G. VANDENHOFF.
<i>Robert</i>	Mr. W. LACEY.
<i>Bernard</i>	Mr. AYLIFF.
<i>Harris</i>	Mr. HONNER.
<i>Stephen</i>	Mr. W. PAYNE.
<i>Jacob</i>	Mr. WIGAN.
<i>William</i>	Mr. KERRIDGE.
<i>Lady Blanche</i>	Madame VESTRIS.
<i>Lady Anne</i>	Mrs. NISBET.
<i>Mistress Blount</i>	Mrs. W. WEST.
<i>Charlotte</i>	Mrs. HUMBY.
<i>Jane</i>	Miss LEE.

OLD MAIDS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT'S House.*

Enter BERNARD and HARRIS.

Har. What time to-morrow?

Ber. At noon, I told thee, he sets off. Be thou forthcoming an hour before at the latest; and mind no item be wanting. We lack leisure for mistakes.

Har. I shall be careful. How takes he this route to Ireland?

Ber. As he takes everything—with an even temper.

Har. He goes not there to sleep.

Ber. No; when he ought to be awake—but he will lose no wink of rest that a proper man should profit by; no more than he will step aside to avoid watching, toil, or peril; which he will share with the meanest soldier in his regiment. Sir Philip Brilliant is a butterfly in the drawing-room, but a man in the field. His nature is of the true stuff! He is a blade of proof in a dainty scabbard; you may laugh at the scabbard, but you won't at the blade.

Har. And takes he this expedition so coolly?

Ber. Coolly?—Judge of the fever it throws him into, when I tell you he has been occupied this hour past in trying on a new suit, with which he means to affront all comparison to-day, for its fashion and splendour. Let us be gone. Here he comes.

Har. And with him Master Robert, his valet. What a pleasant incontinent rogue that Master Robert is!

Ber. Ay, but a frank one, and honest withal—a rogue for the humour only.

Har. I will tell you a trick he played me.

Ber. Nay; if you begin with his tricks, there will never be an end.

Har. But I must tell thee.

Ber. Well; be it as we pass to the door, then. Quick! They are here.

[BERNARD and HARRIS go out.]

Enter SIR PHILIP and ROBERT.

Sir Phil. Now, Robert—for I know you have an eye—
Examine me. Scan me from head to foot
And round about, and say how fits my dress,

And as you love me, Robert, use your skill.
 Lie the seams fair? Sits any part awry?
 Observe the buttons their due distances?
 The slashes their proportions and their places?
 The skirts their lengths and uniformity?
 Lurks anywhere a wrinkle, or a crease?
 Find me a fault, dear Robert, if you can.

Rob. The suit, methinks, is perfect.

Sir Phil. Look again

And jealously! Find me a fault, I'll find
 A crown for you.

Rob. Sooner I'd miss the fault
 Than get the crown.

Sir Phil. I know thy honesty.
 But find the fault, although thou gett'st the crown.

Rob. What's that?

Sir Phil. What, Robert?

Rob. If I may believe
 My eyes—

Sir Phil. Be sure thou mayst, if 'tis a fault
 Thou think'st thou seest.

Rob. 'Tis a fault I see!

Sir Phil. What is it?

Rob. Yet, perhaps, 'tis not a fault.

Sir Phil. It must be one! Thou'rt not inclined to see it,
 And therefore doubt'st it! What is it?

Rob. Alas!

It is a fault.

Sir Phil. A great or little one?
 Don't keep me in suspense; I'm on the rack!
 Well, Robert, well!

Rob. It is a little fault!
 A very little fault—a wrinkle only
 About an inch, a quarter, and a tenth
 In length.

Sir Phil. Were it the tenth without the rest,
 It spoils the suit—off with't! It shall go back!

Rob. It much becomes you! Well the colour sorts
 With your complexion!—and the pattern flogs
 All past achievements of the shaping art!
 And 'tis a dress of excellent proportions,
 Sets off your person to unmatch'd advantage.
 Look at the sleeve alone!—How plain it shows
 The tailor tax'd his brains!

Sir Phil. Where lies the wrinkle?

Rob. Here, near the seam of the left shoulder.

Sir Phil. That's

A place a wrinkle may have leave to come!
 Canst help the wrinkle? There's the piece I promised
 For finding it. If thou canst help it, now,
 That piece will find a fellow.

Rob. I shall try.

I will not promise you I shall succeed.
Stand straight and still. Now, please you, raise your arm;
Now put it down again—Upon my life
'Tis growing less.

Sir Phil. Well done, good Robert.

Rob. 'Tis
Almost away.

Sir Phil. Say it is quite away,
I'll give thee the third piece.

Rob. I would I could;
No hope of that, I fear! A wrinkle is
A stubborn thing! Eh?—What?—I must be blind?
Why, where is it?

Sir Phil. Is't gone?

Rob. I am bewitch'd!
Is aught the matter, think you, with my sight?
Or that is gone, or else the wrinkle's gone;
So gone I swear I cannot find the place!
I can't believe there ever was a wrinkle!

Sir Phil. Good Robert, there are the two crowns.

Rob. Dear sir,
I don't deserve them.

Sir Phil. Nay!—

Rob. Indeed I don't.

Sir Phil. I'll not believe thee.

Rob. Nay, I swear I don't.

I must have fancied that there was a wrinkle.

Sir Phil. Robert, a virtue may become a vice,
Carried too far! Thou art too honest, Robert.

Rob. Nay, hear me, sir!

Sir Phil. I won't! There was a wrinkle!
Did I not set me on my perfect poise?
Stood I not motionless as block of stone?
Then at thy bidding raised I not my arm,
And lower'd it again, that thou mightst jerk
My skirts to take the wrinkle out?—and now
Persuade me there was none! There was a wrinkle!
I will not hear thee!—Peace! So Lady Blanche
And Lady Anne were in the Park to-day!
How look'd fair Lady Blanche?

Rob. Oh, charmingly!
But her companion were the maid for me;
I love her lip of scorn! It dares a man!

Sir Phil. That's shrewdly felt! He were a man indeed
That carried her! That man is yet to come!
She glories in her single state; and, train'd
To mastery in studies men affect,
And seldom progress in, as well as she,
Looks down on all our sex, o'erbearingly,
And leaves the field to lovely Lady Blanche;
Who, though she smiles on courtship, looks as cold
On matrimony as her scornful friend;

While troops besiege her—I among the rest.
 But now good-bye to Venus! Mars commands!
 Be ready, Robert, for the route to-morrow!
 We march at one: meanwhile to Ludgate Hill
 I go, that careless artisan to chide
 My beaver jewel who so slightly set,
 I lost it in the street. Men call me fop,
 And so I am, so will be, and why not?
 It is my humour! Better fop than fool;
 And he's a fool that does not please himself;
 And so the more they smile, the more they may;
 The more I'll give them cause, and smile myself,
 Sitting at ease in mine own snug content,
 Wearing a cheery, frank, and saucy cheek!
 Now tell me, Robert, what men say of me?
 What comeliness give they me credit for
 Besides my person, which I know will pass?

Rob. They say, though rather vain, you are very brave.

Sir Phil. What is it to be brave! I give Heaven thanks
 I was not born a spaniel!—What had I
 To do with that? Find something of mine own
 For which they praise me, I shall thank them then!
 What say they to my gait? I made my gait
 Myself! There's matter in men's gait, good Robert!
 Therein you have the impress of their callings:
 There is the clerk's gait, which implies obedience;
 The shopkeeper's, half service, half command;
 The merchant's, o'er-revolving speculations;
 The lawyer's, quick and keen at quirks and flaws;
 The student's, ponderous as piles of folios;
 The courtier's, supple, prompt for courtesies;
 The soldier's, keeping time with drums and trumpets;
 And twenty others—all most common-place!
 But there's one gait that's paramount of all—
 The gentleman's, that speaks not any calling;
 Shows him at liberty to please himself;
 And, while it meditates offence to none,
 Observes a proper negligence towards all,
 And imperturbable complacency!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—MASTER BLOUNT'S *House*.—A Room
contiguous to his Shop.

Enter JOHN BLOUNT and THOMAS BLOUNT.

Thomas. I will not bide the baiting of thy tongue!—
 I say, I will not!—Let my father rail,
 I'll hear him patiently. I owe not thee
 Observance!—What's the year or two thou hast
 The start of me?

John. I speak but for thy good.

Thomas. Nay, not for that! Thou wouldst speak kindly else!

The fault thou find'st would reach no ear but mine;
I know thee, brother; my defect thou makest
A finger-post to show thine own deserts,
To win me anger, while thyself winn'st praise!
I know thee, John!—I say, no more of this;
I will not bear it!—should not!—I'm a man!

John. Wilt strike me?

Thomas. Heaven forbid my mother's son
Should e'er get blow from me. I tell thee what,
Thou aim'st at empire of my father's heart!
Thou to my father's business wouldst be heir!
Be so!—Thou ne'er shalt find, in me, a let.
His stock-in-trade, good-will, whate'er he hath
Pertaining to his craft, or grown from it,
I freely from this hour renounce all share in!
I'll seek my fortune!—Here I will not stay
To play the money-grub—while men not made
Of better metal, find themselves a name
That lifts them 'bove their birth!

Enter MASTER BLOUNT.

Mas. Blount. How's this?—at words?
Thy brother John has been reprov'g thee.
And thou resistest him—and wherefore, son?
Because he's right, and thou art in the wrong!
The counter, boy!—go practise patience, there!
'Twas that which made thy father, with the help
Of industry. 'Tis roof, son; bed and board,
With which 'tis well thou art provided, else
Thou ne'er hadst earn'd them, Thomas, for thyself!

Thomas. I might have earn'd them, had I been allow'd!

Mas. Blount. Allowed?—

Thomas. To earn them in the way I could!

Mas. Blount. Thou'dst be a soldier, or wouldst go to sea—
Chimeras evermore of boyhood's brain!

John. I never knew them, father.

Mas. Blount. Never, John!

Thou ever didst my wish, and didst it well.

John. And found my own in it. Except for sleep
And meals, I never took an hour from work,
Nor would, suppose I might—nor cared I what
You set me to—the crucible, the vice,
The desk or counter—'twas your will, and done.

Mas. Blount. Ay, John, you are a pattern of a boy!
Go, Thomas! copy by your elder brother!
Demean yourself submissively to him;
Rememb'ring thou dost thy father's will!

Thomas. I love my father! Would that I could love
My father's craft—but that I cannot love!

[Goes out, following JOHN.]

Enter MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Mis. Blount. Heard I not words? I did!—what's wrong with Thomas?

John has been chafing him again! He's not
The boy to bear it, nor is't right he should.
The shop don't fit him, husband! Thou wouldst put
Thy turnspit to his use, thy hound to his;
Did any urge thee to exchange their work,
Thou'dst think him fool, didst thou not call him one!
Thy cart-horse foal, when thou didst set to cart,
Thou didst the thing was wise!—as wisely didst
To break thy jennet's filly for the saddle;
As beast of draught she were not worth her meat!
Givest ear to me? Dost weigh my words?

Mas. Blount. I do.

Mis. Blount. And if thou dost, thou wilt not find them light.
And dost perceive the sequel?

Mas. Blount. No.

Mis. Blount. I am sure
Thou dost not! Never canst thou see the thing
That lies not straight before thee. Ope thine eyes,
And I will put the sequel in their range,
Point blank! Men vary more than horse or dog.
Not as the parentage the progeny!
The noble's cradle rocks a churl—the churl's
A nobleman! A simple craftsman thou,
Hast son, the craft was never made would fit;—
And he must drudge because his father did!

Mas. Blount. Drudge dost thou say?

Mis. Blount. Ay, drudge! and say't again.

Mas. Blount. His brother drudges.

Mis. Blount. So his brother may!

It is his humour; he's his father's son.

Mas. Blount. Whom takes the other after?

Mis. Blount. Whom?—why me!

I tell thee, Thomas is his mother's son.
No handicraft will he make progress in!
Money he values for the using on't—
Would buy a coach and horses in the time
Thou balancest the outlay of a truck!

Mas. Blount. A hopeful son, methinks, has Master Blount,
The Ludgate jeweller.

Mis. Blount. Most hopeful, John;
But not in the shape thou wishest hope to come in,
With sleek comb'd hair and ponderous busy brow,
Scanning a bodkin to resolve him whether
'Tis gold or pinchbeck!—I forgot!—thy hope
Hath comely apron on!—Now look at mine!
A youth of standard height!—proportion'd, well,
In trunk and limb!—of handsome face and bold!
Very!—A cap and plume upon his head!—

Across his field of breast a scarf and belt !

And, in the belt, a sword, as fits a man !

Mas. Blount. What cavalier is this ?

Mis. Blount. What cavalier ?

Thou knowest not thine own son, husband John !

I lose all patience with thee ! Listen now !

Thou hast a son whom fortune meant to climb,

And thou wouldst have to creep !—What use is he

In thy shop or workshop, where thou cast'dst him when

He came from school, as metal that is fused

Into the mould, thinking he'd take what shape

It pleased thee give him ?—Flesh and blood are not

So passive, John !—How little knowest thou,

Dear John, beyond thy trade ! Nine months ago

Lapsed his apprenticeship of seven long years,

And earns he now the keep of journeyman ?

No !—Do I blame him ?—No !—When thou gett'st gold

To do the work of lead, I'll blame him, John,

But not till then.

Mas. Blount. The fault is thine.

Mis. Blount. Is mine !

Am I in fault ?

Mas. Blount. I say—

Mis. Blount. Am I in fault ?

Mas. Blount. I won't say *fault*.

Mis. Blount. Go on.

Mas. Blount. Thou hast him taught

The ways of gentleman. Contents thee not

He learns our homely measures, he must skip

As courtiers do, so thou provid'st him with

A foreign dancing-master ! Not enough

The jockey, taught his brother, should teach him,

Behoves him have a soldier's seat, and so

Thou gett'st a regimental riding-master !

Mis. Blount. Proceed, good husband John.

Mas. Blount. It pleased thee not

Dick Cottingham should teach him quarter-staff—

Mis. Blount. Dick Cottingham !—I'd beat Dick Cottingham

At quarter-staff myself !

Mas. Blount. Thou must employ

Professionals in that.

Mis. Blount. Teach a boy right,

Or not at all ! Go on !

Mas. Blount. From quarter-staff

He needs must to the rapier go.

Mis. Blount. No doubt !

Mas. Blount. The which—not satisfied the boy should get

A simple notion on't—he practises

Till he can beat his master !

Mis. Blount. Art not glad

Of that ?—Art thou not glad on't, husband John ?

The day will come, and, mind my words, it will,

When thou wilt chuckle at it!—chuckle, husband!
Thy boy can beat his master!—who'll beat *him*?

Mas. Blount. John is as good a boy!

Mis. Blount. Who cheapens John?
What loss to him his brother gets his due?
He likes the inside of the counter!—Well,
He has it!—Thomas likes the other side!
And yet thou know'st not John!—Though he's my son,
He's cunning. 'Tis not natural in one,
So young in years, to be, in acts, so old.
The husbandman prefers a backward spring!
The fruit is fear'd that comes before its time!
Did John observe thee less, 'twould please me more!
What wouldst thou say now, should I tell thee plain
His fancies look a mile beyond the shop,
In which thou think'st his heart wrapp'd wholly up?
'Tis so; he'd laugh to throw the apron off
He smiles at putting on!

Mas. Blount. Thou wrong'st him, wife.

Mis. Blount. Believe so, since thou wilt—let me know Thomas.
He'll ne'er ply craft, but be a gentleman.
That time is come with you, and still you toil.

Mas. Blount. I'll think on what thou say'st.

Mis. Blount. So, husband, do.

The man who has a wife hath counsel, John,
At hand, that's ever better than his own! [Goes out.]

Sir P. Bril. [without]. Within is he? Then I'll step in to him.

Mas. Blount. Sir Philip Brilliant!—He speaks angrily.

Sir Phil. [Entering.] How comes it, Master Blount, you treat me thus?

Why callest thou thyself a jeweller,
And sett'st a gem so carelessly, as soon
As worn, 'tis lost? Where is the brilliant, sir,
I paid thee down a hundred crowns for? Look!
'Tis gone. [Showing his hat.]

Mas. Blount. I see it is, and grieve for it.

Sir Phil. Wilt thou replace it?

Mas. Blount. Is it fit I should?

Sir Phil. Yes; for you set it.

Mas. Blount. Yes; and set it well!

Sir Phil. Well, Master Blount! Sett'st thou a jewel well,
And falls it out as soon as set?

Mas. Blount. The loop

You must have strain'd!—You flung your beaver down,
And gave it blow, perhaps; or doffing it
Too freely, swung'st against a wall or rail,
And shook'st, thyself, the jewel from its seat.

Sir Phil. Not so I doff my beaver!—Throw it down!
'Sdeath, Master Blount, thou think'st it not enough,
Through fault of thee I lose a peerless gem—
Thou must disparage, too, my bearing, sir!

My carriage, sir, wherein I stand alone,
Which prize beyond a mine—ay, mines of gems!
I fling my beaver down?—*I* strike a wall
Or rail, in doffing it? *I?*—*I?*—The gem
I might forgive, but can't pass over that!
Down, sir, and beg my pardon!

Thom. [*Coming forward.*] He shall not!
The gem was fitly set.

Sir Phil. How knowest thou?

Thom. My father says it!—That the gem was lost,
Was fault of thine alone.

Sir Phil. Do you know me?

Thom. Yes.

Sir Phil. I know thou dost; yet knowing it, I doubt,
Through wonder at thy boldness, sirrah!

Thom. What!

Sir Phil. Know'st thou what cuffs are?

Thom. Yes; I have given them!

Sir Phil. Ay?

'Tis time thou learn to take them.

Thom. Thou'rt not he
Can teach me that.

Sir Phil. [*Aside to him.*] Ay? thou preferr'st perhaps
A higher lesson. Canst thou use a sword?

Thom. [*Aside to SIR PHILIP.*] By trying thou canst judge.

Sir Phil. [*Aside to THOMAS.*] If worthy one,
Thou'lt steal a rapier out and follow me
A pace beyond the wall—I'll wait thee there. [*Goes out.*]

Mas. Blount. What said he, Thomas?

Thom. Something—nothing, sir.
His fault, methinks, he half begins to see.
That errand, brother, you would send me on,
I hasten now to do.

Mas. Blount. What errand, Thomas?

Thom. John will inform you, sir. [*Goes out.*]

Mas. Blount. What is it, John?

John. I vow he has scared my memory out of me.

Mas. Blount. What errand has thy brother gone upon?

John. I vow I have forgot.

Mas. Blount. There's something more
Than he would let me see.—Thy cap, boy, haste,
While I get mine, for we must after him! [*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*The outside of London Wall.*

Enter SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT.

Sir Phil. The goldsmith's son has won me! There are men,
I have heard warriors say, look beautiful
In action. So would he! How radiantly
The man shone out! We'll change a pass or two,

I'll touch him, that I prove him! 'Tis one thing
 To talk about the rapier's point, another
 To look upon it, and another yet
 To feel it. He shall feel it—not to rue it!
 He comes! There is purpose in his looks! His heart
 And feet are going the same way! The man
 I take him for!—worth winning for a friend!
 You have made haste.

Enter THOMAS.

Thom. What haste I could.

Sir Phil. I know it,
 And I expected it, and like you for it!
 I love an enemy to be in earnest!
 You are sure you use the rapier?

Thom. Judge yourself—
 I am ready for you!—Come!

[*They fight.*]

Sir Phil. You are too hot,
 And lay yourself too open. Twice just now
 I could have run you through!

Thom. Why did not you?

Sir Phil. Aha! Beware, or you will make me hug you!

Thom. Come on.

Sir Phil. Be cooler, then.

Thom. I will.

Sir Phil. That's right!
 Most sweetly parried!—Better yet return'd!
 That feint was masterly; I balk'd it though—
 I have hit you!

Thom. No! Come on!

Sir Phil. I am sure I have!

Thom. Come on!

Sir Phil. You felt me, for I felt my point!

Thom. Come on, I say!

Sir Phil. Since you will have it so!
 That longe meant something, but it would not do.
 Prepare!—I'll hit you now again! 'Tis done!

Thom. I fight, not talk!

Sir Phil. I talk whene'er I fight,
 As when I eat or drink.

Thom. Come on!

Sir Phil. Again!
 I have hit you thrice.

Thom. I feel no wound!

Sir Phil. There's blood!

Thom. A scratch brings blood!

Sir Phil. A deep one, though, it takes
 To drain the cheek; and thine is growing pale—
 Not, I'll be sworn, with fear! I touch'd you, only,
 Because I meant to sting you, not to kill,
 Before I knew you, as I know you now.
 But knowing you as now I do, I swear
 I would not kill you for mine own life's sake,

Which at your will I place!

[Throws down his sword; THOMAS drops his, and tottering towards SIR PHILIP, faints in his arms.]

I fear'd 'twas so,

But fear no worse.—He faints, from loss of blood;

A flesh-wound, nothing graver—Stanch'd, 'tis heal'd!

Enter MASTER BLOUNT and JOHN.

Mas. Blount. Sir Philip, what's amiss?

Sir Phil. Your son revives;

A passing sickness only, Master Blount;

Stanching removes it quite. Your handkerchief

To keep the compress on I make of mine.

His colour comes again, and all is right!

Now hear you, Master Blount. Ne'er left your shop

A jewel rich as is this son of yours.

Commit his fortunes to my hands!—You shall!

I have proved his metal—It has won my heart,

And turn'd me from a foe into a friend;

Yea more, a brother, bound to him as fast

As he partition'd with me the same blood.

Refuse me not!—I will not be gainsaid!

My footman comes—my carriage is at hand.

Enter Footman.

The gem I lost I will forgive thee for,

And fifty to its back, so grant me this.

Although not born a gentleman, thy son

Was form'd to be one; such I'll make of him!

So farewell desk and counter, Master Blount!

There!—Gently—come along with us!—Take care!

[SIR PHILIP and his footman supporting THOMAS, go out, followed by MASTER BLOUNT.]

John. The shop is now my own! As we came hither,

My father said he would retire from it,

And leave his trade to me!—and if he does,

Not long his trade and I keep company.

We have been intimates too close—too long—

Familiarity begets contempt!

I hate and scorn my trade. He little knows

What riches burrow in his drawers and chests;

The keys of which I keep, and he forgets!

My plans are laid!—Soon as he quits the town,

I sell off stock and trade, and quit the shop!

Talk of our Thomas!—He a gentleman!

Where is the money? I have taken care

Of that! From interest on his bonds alone

My father will retire in affluence;

The rest is mine, and I'll make use of it

To lay myself out for a high alliance

By marriage!—Trust to me for policy.

If there is one thing I am better in

Than any other thing—'tis policy.

[Goes out.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Park.*

Enter ROBERT, STEPHEN, *and* JACOB.

Rob. He is as rich as Cræsus, sirs, with wit
Enough to keep his purse-strings tight, unless
His own particular occasion prompts
The wish to loosen them! He is at once
Luxurious and a miser.—Some good nature,
More cunning, less discretion. You see through him;
He has a vanity which lays him open
To commonest observers: for example,—
Know him an hour, and he spreads out for you
A banquet of his tastes, his faculties,
His qualities; wherein he most succeeds—
Which is by turns, indeed, in everything—
Not that he would appear to slight his neighbours,
Or wish to pass for anything, beyond
A common, simple, ordinary man!

Steph. Where made you this redoubtable acquaintance?

Rob. Why, at a race-course, on a holiday,
When fortune made us neighbours. One who knew me
At distance, give me salutation by
The title which I hold in virtue of
My place near fair Sir Philip! In a moment
I was a friend the richer! Straight he grappled me!
His name, his station, income, residence,
All in a twink were mine—his sole omission
The stock he sprung from, which he would root up—
Yea, sirs, the very father that begot him,
And gave up stock and trade to him—and affluence
Beyond his calculation; the slow piling
Of fifty years and upwards, to himself
Grown out of mind, but not to his successor;
Who, having long imprison'd upstart wishes
Beneath the homely apron of his craft,
Now throws this off, no more of use to him,
And shows the others that now need no concealment!
Converts his drawers and shelves to currency,
His currency to lands and messuages,
And o'er the tradesman's counter featly vaulting,
Springs into the saddle of the gentleman!
By strangest chance I learnt his history.

Jacob. Hopeful acquaintance.

Rob. Say fruition-full!

Well, sir, "I must go home with him; partake
"What a plain dresser sends." Ere dinner's done,
I am in his bosom! Now beseeches he
My list of lady spinsters, which I give him,

The features, stature, carriage, and complexion,
Wit, temper, parentage, and education ;
When, of my goodness, prays he introduction
To one I think would suit him !

Steph. Which, of course,
You grant him.

Rob. Readily !

Steph. My life upon it,
The countess !

Jacob. Charlotte !—Maid to Lady Jane ?

Rob. No less.

Jacob. Had he but known the rogue he dealt with !
A simpleton as safe beside a sharper !

Rob. Yet knowing, modestly, I had my masters
Compared to whom I am a journeyman,
I promised presentation to your lordships—
For you are lords in virtue of your places,
As I, in right of mine, a baronet—
And here appointed him this afternoon
His walk to that intent ! Ah, here he is !
I pray you keep your rank before your eyes
In all you say and do. They only may
Forget their rank who have good title to it,
And by the lapse prove gainers. Mind, you are lords.

John. [*Entering.*] Good morning to you, fair Sir Philip.
Fair

Is fairest worth.—So, sir, I bow to you.

Rob. The noble friends I had the honour, sir,
Of naming to you—this Lord Stephen Hyde,
And this Lord John Fitzwalter.

John. Dear me, sir,
You overpower me !—May I use the freedom
To shake hands with your lordships ?

Steph. 'Tis a boon, sir,
We would entreat of you !

John. [*To ROBERT.*] *There's noble breeding !*

Rob. Whence come you ?

John. From my after-dinner airing,
In my own phaeton, built to my own order,
After a pattern of my own designing ;
The springs my own, the perch, the pole, the colour,
Harness and everything ! So please your lordships,
I have a taste, and it shall have its way
While I can pay for it.

Steph. As right it should, sir.

John. Then am I fond of driving.

Jacob. Most men like
The thing that they excel in.

John. Oh, my lord !—

Your lordship may have seen me hold the reins—
I flatter myself you have !

Jacob. You may so, safely.

John. I could have sworn you had ! If there is one thing
I master 'fore another, it is holding
The reins.

Rob. What did you before breakfast ?

John. Ride—

Your lordships fancy horses ?—All men do
Who have good judgment, and can back them well.
Mine are all thorough-bred !—my hackney even !—
And broke in for myself.—A horse, my lords,
Should know his master, and him only !—No
Believing what a universe of mischief
Is done by a strange hand ! The mouth is spoil'd !—
If not the mouth, the pace ; if not the pace,
The temper !—maybe, temper, pace, and mouth
Together !—What's the value of the horse !
And then the seat—No easy thing, my lords !
Of fifty men who vault into the saddle,
Not one may have a seat there ! In the manage
Be there one thing wherein I beat another,
'Tis in my seat !

Steph. Most safely may you say it.

John. Your lordship, I presume, has seen me ride.
Sir Philip, 'hope you have not got a headache ?

Rob. Not I !—have you ?

John. Why something rather like one,
For which I blame the wine of yesterday.

Rob. Nay, sir, the wine was good.

John. Oh, excellent ;
A most sound wine, and of the proper age ;
Three years in wood, in bottle thrice that time ;
The merchant durst not cheat me, for he knows me.
I ne'er keep wine but of prime quality !
I have a cellar—No one less occasion
To find fault with his wine !—Were mine not good,
The money was that bought it !—but no foresight
Is match against mishap !—A bottle may
Be cork'd. 'Twas so with the last bottle ! At
The time I had a slight suspicion only,
But now I am positive !

Rob. You are deceived.

John. Impossible, my dear Sir Philip. If
I am superlative in anything,
Beyond all other things that I excel in,
'Tis in my taste for wine !

Rob. But now to business !

My noble friends approve the match we spoke of,
And promise you their interest, to help
Your wish to its fulfilment !

John. They o'erpower me !

My lords, I am beholden to you more
Than did I ransack the whole dictionary,
I could find words of value to describe !

Befits it, though, a private gentleman,
Of modest fortune, only, at the best,
Should offer hand to dame of quality?
Talk'd you not, dear Sir Philip, of promotion?

Rob. Oh, yes!—promotion certainly—Lord John,
Where have you the most interest? in church
Or state?

Steph. 'Tis difficult to say—let's see!
Upon my word, I think it is a balance!

Rob. And how say you, Lord Stephen?

Jacob. Like Lord John,
In church and state, my interest is equal.

Rob. [*To JOHN.*] How leans *your* predilection?—to the
church?

John. Why, hang it, no! the surplice spoils the figure,
A man and gown sort strangely!—fancy me
In a gown! I might endure it on the Sunday,
But for the week-day gear that's tack'd to it!
Of formal mode and sombre colour! Dress
All the year round most like an undertaker
In waiting upon funerals!—could I wear
This cap and plume were I a clergyman?

Rob. [*and the rest*]. No, certainly!

John. The church won't do for me.

Rob. It must be in the state, then! For what office
Would you be ready, on emergency,
Say one fell sudden vacant?

John. Will you believe me,
I cannot tell!

Rob. There is the Home department,
And there's the Foreign! There's the minister
Of War and of Finance!—Diplomacy
Perhaps might suit your genius! Which of these
Would find you most at home, sir?

John. Do you know,
I'm at a loss to tell!—Indeed I am!
Upon my life I am!—To answer you,
Safely, for both your credit and my own,
I think 'twere best I say, as likely one
As another.

Rob. Doubtless there is none you fear
To undertake?

John. None!—Fear? No fear, Sir Philip!
Find me the office, I am sure to find
Abilities to fill it!

Rob. Yet perhaps
There's something you prefer to church or state;
What think you of the army?

John. Of the army?
It is my taste, my bent, my very instinct!
It must be!—why should else a fife and drum
Raise in me such commotion? When I hear them,

John. I could have sworn you had ! If there is one thing
I master 'fore another, it is holding
The reins.

Rob. What did you before breakfast ?

John. Ride—

Your lordships fancy horses ?—All men do
Who have good judgment, and can back them well.
Mine are all thorough-bred !—my hackney even !—
And broke in for myself.—A horse, my lords,
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Say one fell sudden vacant?

John. Will you believe me,
I cannot tell!

Rob. There is the Home department,
And there's the Foreign! There's the minister
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I'm at a loss to tell!—Indeed I am!
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As another.

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Abilities to fill it!

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There's something you prefer to church or state;
What think you of the army?

John. Of the army?
It is my taste, my bent, my very instinct!
It must be!—why should else a fife and drum
Raise in me such commotion? When I hear them,

The war is all before me!—Infantry,
Cavalry, and artillery, and baggage!
Marchings, encampings, battles, sieges!—feats
In the field and breach of superhuman daring,
Such perils breasted and o'ercome, as man
Durst never cope before with—look at—think of—
All of my own conceiving

Rob. Dream you never
Of dying in such straits?

John. No!—Never!

Rob. Strange!—

I may say, wonderful!

John. You may!—Through bayonets
And swords I rush, as they were stubble—hail
Of cannon-balls, shells, musketry, no more
Than wither'd leaves blown round by winds in autumn!

Rob. And are you never wounded?

John. Wounded?—Yes!

Struck down, but up and on my feet again
Almost in the self-same moment!

Rob. Pain and all

Forgotten?

John. As a pin had scratch'd me.

Rob. And

Enacting more than ever!

John. Miracles!

Steph. He certainly was born to be a soldier.

John. And such I will be with your leaves, my lords.
What rank?

Rob. Behoves you be an ensign first,
From ensign to lieutenant, thence to captain,
On captain mounts the major, on the major
The colonel.

John. Takes it long to be the colonel?

Rob. By service long, by interest not at all!

John. I'll choose the army.

Rob. Yet, my lords, a word!

'Twill never do to court proud Lady Blanche
As ensign or lieutenant; nay, as even
Captain or major!—Nothing less, my lord,
Than colonel! Here is a dilemma!

Steph. A

Dilemma, certainly.

Jacob. A sad dilemma.

John. My lords!—Sir Philip—what is to be done?

Rob. Stop!—Hold!—I have it!—What is sure to come,
One surely may regard as come, already!

Steph. Ay, come as certain, as about to come.

Rob. And why not call him colonel then at once?
Your lordship will have no objection?

Steph. None.

John. My dear good lord.

Rob. Nor you, my lord?
Jacob. No more
 Than his lordship.
John. My most excellent good lord!
Rob. Then, Colonel Blount, I give you joy!
John. My dear
 Sir Philip!
Steph. and Jacob. Give you joy, fair Colonel Blount.
John. Dear lords—Dear friend—I choke with gratitude.
Rob. There only wants the introduction now,
 Which I'll accomplish with your lordship's help.
 I know you'll patronize my friend, whilst I
 Take charge of Lady Blanche; and as we go,
 We'll settle time and place! Come, colonel; show us
 How you can court!
John. Court, sir?—Did you say, court?
 Therein am I especially at home!
 May I presume on any excellence
 I have, it is on knowing how to court! [They go out.]

SCENE II.—*A Room in the House of* LADY ANNE.

Enter CHARLOTTE and JANE.

Char. A fine plot, is it not?
Jane. But where the profit,
 Besides the mirth 'twill bring you?
Char. Quite enough!
Jane. You have not seen him yet?
Char. That happiness
 Lies in perspective. They appoint to-day
 The time and place of meeting. If, by chance,
 You note me in the street with a strange friend,
 Remember I'm the countess—pass me by,
 Unless I give you sign I am myself.
Jane. And Robert plann'd it all?
Char. Robert?—For shame!
 Sir Philip, if you please! If, when together,
 We talk of one another, keep in mind
 We are our noble selves! You Lady Anne!
 I, Lady Blanche!—Robert, Sir Philip Brilliant;
 Jacob and Stephen, of their masters' styles;
 Lord John Fitzwalter and Lord Stephen Hyde!
 And, so, through all our circle of familiars!
 'Tis but with such, as do not understand us,
 Who know us less, than we do one another,
 We pass for commoners! You are new to us!
 Sir Philip is the author of the plot.
 'Twas not to lose his time he went to college—
 No more than others born and bred above him—

And spent three years there ! You will travel ere
You find his match in mischief.

Jane. [*Listening.*] Did you hear
My lady's voice ?

Char. I heard that person speak.

Jane. That person ?

Char. Lady Anne, 'long as you live,
Never let down yourself !—You'll find too many
Ready to do that kindness for you.

Jane. [*Listening.*] There
Is Lady Blanche.

Char. I think it is that person.
Don't look surprised—although we owe her some
Consideration, as our foster sister,
Who shared with us our mother's nurture—nay,
Participates with us almost one nature,
Making a jest of love, and sport of lovers ;
While, she *you* deign to serve, escheweth both !
We trust your ladyship will be at home
To-morrow when we call.

Jane. Yes, Charlotte.

Char. Charlotte !

Forgive me, Lady Anne—your ladyship
Forgets yourself ! 'Tis Lady Blanche departs
And bids good morning to you, lady ! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*Another Room.*

Enter LADY BLANCHE and LADY ANNE.

Lady Bl. Man !—man !—the paragon !—The fool, he is,
When women know themselves and how to treat him ;
The knave, when left to his own practices !
Is there a husband you can name, who bears
His course of wooing out ?—who does not prove it
A trade of common snaring ?—who resembles
The man he was before the honey-moon ?
A woman's life, my friend, from girlhood onwards,
Has melancholy progress ! She begins
A goddess ; then declines into a bride—
Which means a young wife keeping holiday,
As children, sent to school, go not at once
To tasks—next sinks into a housekeeper—
Her wedding-ring her badge of office !—thence
Haply into a nurse !—When, matters not
How soon she settles into grandmama,
To tell her offspring, of her second stock,
The story of her cozening !

Lady A. How I love you
When thus you talk ! Would all our sex were like you !
And, yet, *you* suffer men, while *I* repel them !

Lady Bl. I suffer them, to plague them, and I do so.
You are an old maid by anticipation,
And make the arch dissemblers stand aloof.
Oh, how I dote upon a stanch old maid!—
I'll die one!—She stands up for liberty!
Talk of the rights of men! The rights that want
Upholding are the rights of women!—Men
Are tyrants!—have too many rights! We know it!
Ours are the rights want champions! We should be lost
Without old maids—Oh, the delicious crabs!
The faces men make at them, when they find them
Their masters!

Lady A. Women have more soul than men.

Lady Bl. Men have no soul at all compared to women!
Look at Queen Bess! The man she made of England—
A man to cuff all comers! She was in fault
In one thing, though.

Lady A. And prithee what was that?

Lady Bl. She did not call her own sex to her councils!
Which had she done, women had proved themselves
The things they *could* be, would men give them leave!
Cecil and Burleigh!—Bacon!—What were they
But what a woman made them? Men, indeed!
There was a sample of man's proper place,
When Essex got his ears box'd!—Do you feel
Your fingers tingle? Mine do!—Yet was she
In love with Essex!

Lady A. Were you ne'er in love?

Lady Bl. Are you in madness! Wherefore do you ask?

Lady A. Because of late, whene'er you talk of love
You sigh! I have had strange thoughts about you, Blanche.
They call you a coquette, and so you are;
Yet something tells me, once upon a time,
You felt a touch of love. Do you remember
A certain fair Whit-Monday? Ah, you blush!

Lady Bl. Because you tax me!—Blush!—That fair Whit-Monday

We went a-shopping; and, for an adventure,
Disguised ourselves as simple yeoman's daughters.
What's *there* to blush at?

Lady A. Nothing, if no more—
If nothing follow'd—if that fair Whit-Monday
You did not make a conquest of a youth
Who waited on us.

Lady Bl. Was it at the draper's?

Lady A. No, Blanche. No youth was in the draper's shop!

Lady Bl. The mercer's, then?

Lady A. Nor was it at the mercer's,
Nor yet the cordwainer's—where had it been,
How had the blushing youth contrived to take
The span of your maidship's instep, all the while
His eyes upon your face—whence, as I live.

He never moved them, till we left the shop,—
 Except to find the articles we ask'd for!—
 A youth misused of fate to set him, where
 Behoved his betters rather wait than he!
 A lofty forehead, like a marble dome
 For princely thoughts to dwell in!—eyes to court
 Challenge of war or love, showing themselves
 Frankly and boldly at their posts—a nose
 Of the fine Grecian, with a touch of Rome;
 Elegance crown'd with strength; a mouth composed
 Of lips were fashion'd after Cupid's bow,
 And, like it, made to send his arrow home,
 Wing'd with their dulcet twang! ambitious chin,
 Dimpled and knobb'd like pattern Antinous!
 There is his face, which well his neck and bust
 Deserved; as for the rest of him, you know
 The counter hid him from us.

Lady Bl. Counter-like!

In calculation of the drawback, doubtless,
 His head and bust had suffer'd, through the fault
 Of his mis-shapen legs. I should not wonder
 Had he clubb'd feet.

Lady A. Have you not seen his feet?
 Come! Did you never on adventure go
 A-shopping there again?

Lady Bl. Well, Anne, I did!
 Again, and yet again.—Nay, do not laugh,
 'Twas only to enjoy the goldsmith's blush!

Lady A. There, Blanche! Just now you could not find
 the shop!

Lady Bl. Well! things will jump into one's memory
 When least we look for them. Why do you laugh?
 Don't laugh, dear Anne, and I shall tell you more!
 I took the goldsmith to my milliner's
 One day when he perforce would see me home—
 A yeoman's daughter could not well, you know,
 O'errule a goldsmith's son. Well, at the door
 In vain I dropp'd him curtesy after curtesy,
 In linsey-woolsey mode! He would not go.
 "He must have speech with me a minute!"—"Nay!"
 "Indeed he must,"—then said I, "Nay," again.
 "He must in pity,"—still did I say, "Nay."
 But what's the use of "nay," said fifty times,
 If "yes" at last will come?—and come it did:
 "He might have speech a minute!" What's a minute?
 A portion of an hour! A portion gone,
 The hour is broken!—What's the value of
 A broken thing?—As well he have the hour!
 The hour he had! The goldsmith's son was smitten;
 Love at first sight!—the arrow in the core!
 Whereat the maid amused—it may be *pleased*;
 Touch'd, will you have it so.—Well, she was touch'd!—

Did after grant the goldsmith divers meetings,
Listening in silence to his rhapsodies
In rustic cloak, with hood drawn o'er her head,
Her face but half-revealing! Till, at length,
Feeling a something—nothing like a passion!—
Perhaps an interest—yes; like that one watches
The progress of a pleasant story with,
But which indulging, is but waste of time;
Having a horror, too, of slavery—
No matter how far out of reach of it—
And then, besides, admonish'd by my rank;
At last I took the resolution
To drop the masquerade—although, I own,
With some compunction.

Lady A. He deserved some.

Lady Bl. He!

Why, was he not a man!—He proved he was!
Made out his right and title.—Took his leave
Without good-bye, by word or yet by missive;
Since when I ne'er have met him. 'Twas as well,
Although it mortified me!—Nothing more.

Lady A. Who, think you, is come home? Sir Philip Brilliant.
When we have time, I'll let you hear a tale
Of him, that does him honour. His adventure
Was likewise with a goldsmith's son.

Lady Bl. Perhaps

The same.—What was it?—Come, the heads of it?

Lady A. They chanced to quarrel; fought. His adversary,
Though wounded, would not own it, till almost
He dropp'd with loss of blood—whereat Sir Philip,
Amazed and captivated, grew his friend;
Took him abroad with him, and step by step
Has raised to his own rank. He comes with him,
This very evening, to pay visit to me,
And introduce the gentleman.

Lady Bl. His name?

Lady A. I never thought to ask it!

Lady Bl. Should it be!

You and Sir Philip are good friends, it seems.
On me he has not call'd!

Lady A. He is your slave.

You have him at your foot whene'er you please;
I own it has amazed me, that a man,
So slight to contemplate, should have achieved
An act of generous manhood so robust
In healthy comeliness.

Jane. [*Entering.*] Sir Philip Brilliant.

*Enter SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT and THOMAS as COLONEL
BLOUNT.*

Lady A. Welcome, Sir Philip.

Sir Phil. Colonel Blount, my friend.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] The goldsmith's son!

Sir Phil. Fair Lady Anne, I kiss
Your hand, and for my friend here, Colonel Blount,
Claim your acquaintance.

Lady A. [*To LADY BLANCHE.*] 'Tis the goldsmith's son!
He does not know you!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] How should he?—He never
Beheld my face except beneath my hood.
How can he, in the countess, find a trace
O' the simple yeoman's maid? You'll pardon me,
I must go home! Good evening!—Go you to
The rout to-night, Sir Philip?

Sir Phil. Yes.

Lady Bl. We'll meet;
And I can answer for our host, he'll thank you
To bring your friend.—Farewell.—Good morning, sir. [*Goes out.*]

Lady A. [*Aside.*] She seems disturb'd.

Sir Phil. Fair Lady Anne, permit
My friend to write a line that asks despatch,—
Forgot on leaving home!

Lady A. The library!
Pray you step in and freely help yourself.

Col. Blount. I thank you, lady!—How resemblances,
The most remote, recall familiar things,
As in a ray of light one sees the sun!
Less than the ray unto the sun is she
That's gone, to her whose image she recall'd;
And set before my mind, as palpably,
As though the paragon stood, there, before me! [*Goes out.*]

Sir Phil. Dear Lady Anne, in your kind welcome back
I gladly miss'd your wonted scorn of me.

Lady A. Gladly!—why name it then to bring it back?
See what you've done! What shall I call thee now?
Ware from the milliner's, the tailor's, or
The cordwainer's, or jeweller's, or what?
Thyself is the least part of thee! The man
Is trimmings to the dress.—Thou art a ruff
Of plaits elaborate and infinite;
Thy vest, for curiosity of style,
Armour of diamonds upon velvet plaited,
Were better given a cabinet to keep,
As theme for wonderment to after-time,
Than left provision for the hungry air,
That's sure to eat it up! Thy jerkin runs
Enormous risk from thy ambition! trying
With satin slashes, ribbon-knots, and lace,
How close to woman's gear a man's may come,
And still appear a man's—thy trunks partake
Its divers sins; and for thy hose, who says,
In town or out of town, thou walk'st not in
A shrubbery, why let him own he is blind,
To save his credit for veracity!

Thy very rapier would abjure the man !
 Its handle vouches for the laceman more
 Than the cutler—nay, nor him beside, alone ;
 'Twas plann'd in concert with a milliner !
 Which of the precious metals has the honour
 To help it to a blade ! It cannot be
 A thing so exquisitely delicate
 Could pair with homely steel ?

Sir Phil. Give over !

Lady A. I will.

Sir Phil. I want a friend, dear Lady Anne.

Lady A. A friend ?

And come you to a woman for a friend ?

Better you seek a man !

Sir Phil. He cannot help me,—

A woman can ; she knows a woman's mind,
 And how 'tis hit ; which, being done, they say,
 Her heart's in jeopardy !

Lady A. Who say so ? They
 Who do not know her ? Hit her heart, you are sure
 Of her mind.

Sir Phil. No easy thing to do ! For, now,
 Three years and upwards have I tried to hit
 The heart of Lady Blanche !

Lady A. I know you have.

Sir Phil. Three years are past, yet am I now as wide
 As ever of the mark.

Lady A. Had you guess'd that
 At setting out, what labour had you spared,
 Or spent, perhaps, to more account, employ'd
 On some one else ! *Sir Philip !*

Sir Phil. Lady Anne ?

Lady A. For three years have you been my fair acquaintance ;
 And, if I err not, all that lapse of time,
 You have enjoy'd good health !

Sir Phil. Nay ; no man better !

Lady A. Your appetite has never fail'd you ?

Sir Phil. Never !

Lady A. So I should think !—You have always slept
 o' nights ?

Sir Phil. From laying down my head to lifting it !

Lady A. Sound sleep ?—No trouble in the shape of dreams ?

Sir Phil. None that I recollect.

Lady A. And yet in love !

And not successfully !—'Tis very strange !

Sir Phil. 'Tis very strange !

Lady A. Come, tell me how you feel
 Towards Lady Blanche ? What are the signs, whereby
 You know you love her, when you think of her ?
 Do you sigh very deeply ?

Sir Phil. I'm not sure
 That e'er I sigh, at all—but I'm in love.

Lady A. You cannot be in love, unless you sigh.

Sir Phil. A man may sigh, without his knowing it.

Lady A. That's true. How feel you when another man
Detains her ear aloof?

Sir Phil. How feel I then?
How *should* I feel?

Lady A. Do you not purse your brows?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. No!—Do you not bite your lip?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. No?
Nor clench your hand?

Sir Phil. Nor clench my hand!—Why should I?

Lady A. Could you not knock him down?

Sir Phil. I should like to know
For what?

Lady A. You would like to know for what? You are deep—
You are very deep in love. What would you do
With Lady Blanche, suppose you married her?

Sir Phil. Show her to court and town—go everywhere,
And take her with me, that the world might see
She, that rejected scores, was won by me.

Lady A. It is his vanity that loves, not he! [*Aside.*
No enterprise of danger, then, it seems,
I help you in, instructing you the way
To win the heart of lovely Lady Blanche!

Sir Phil. None!

Lady A. Should we fail, you are a sound man still;
There is no fear of dying, falling sick,
Of loss of appetite, or sleep, or aught
Pernicious to your comfort?

Sir Phil. Not the least!

Lady A. If you should fail, you fail; if win, you win!
Indifferent which!

Sir Phil. Nay, I would rather win!

Lady A. [*Aside.*] You ought, that covet it so heartily!

Sir Phil. Now, then, my lesson! What am I to do?

Lady A. 'Tis plain she likes you not, the man you are.

Sir Phil. 'Tis *very* plain.

Lady A. Then be another man.
This outlay of attire—this garniture
Of trimmings and of trinkets—looks not well
In certain women's eyes. It comes too near
Themselves!

Sir Phil. It does so.

Lady A. Change this gear at once.
Dress well, but let it be like other men—
Nothing particular—as if you'd say
“Look at me, ladies! How do you like me?” What
A question for a man! and do not speak
Between a simper and a lisp; it shames
A mouth with a beard; and don't tread mincingly:
'Tis bad enough in a woman,—what, then, in

A man! And in the act of courtesy
Give not your body such a sway, as though
It were a miracle the trunk and limbs
Could hold together; but in all your acts
Be simple and at home. You may gain much
And will lose nothing by it. Do you read?

Sir Phil. Occasionally, yes—by fits and starts.

Lady A. Latin and Greek?

Sir Phil. I have half-forgotten them.

Lady A. Would you renew your memory there with me,
You are welcome. Call and let us read together.

Sir Phil. Dear Lady Anne, how good you are! We are
friends?

Lady A. We are!

Sir Phil. Then let me seal it on your hand.
I am almost loath to go!

Lady A. "Almost," no stop!
Keep ever to "almost," you are safe enough!

Sir Phil. I'll see what keeps my friend!

Lady A. I'll follow you!

Sir Phil. Yet, ere I go, I'll kiss your hand, once more.

[Goes out.]

Lady A. That man has got a heart and does not know it.
Nought of himself, save what his mirror shows him,

He sees. His eyes are shut to what he is,

Therein, where lie his nobler properties.

I'll open them and make a man of him!

Anne! What art thou about? Eschewest thou

His sex and hold'st companionship with him?

In charity!—nothing more! It would be strange

If, teaching him to woo fair Lady Blanche,

I chanced to cause him turn his eyes on me!

At the bare thought how takes my heart alarm!

Well!—Can I help it, comes it to that pass?

It is his own affair! and, touching Blanche,

No heartscald 'tis to her! She loves him not.

My life upon it, not without some cost,

Did Blanche return to sun her eyes again

I' th' blushing cheek of the young jeweller!

I wonder was it fancy, but I thought

Sir Philip blush'd on taking leave of me.

Those blushes are strange things! Upon my life,

One cannot think of them, but one feels strangely!

Well for him he's in love with Lady Blanche.

If bad his chance with her, 'twere worse with me!

And yet I doubt if love for her he feels.

Love her three years, and never once fall sick,

Lack appetite, lose sleep—sound sleep! no dreams

To trouble it!—no hurricane of sighs.

Allow another lay close siege to her

And never purse his brow, nor bite his lip,

Nor clench his hand as he could knock him down!

He cannot be in love with Lady Blanche!

[Goes out.]

Lady A. You cannot be in love, unless you sigh.

Sir Phil. A man may sigh, without his knowing it.

Lady A. That's true. How feel you when another man
Detains her ear aloof?

Sir Phil. How feel I then?
How *should* I feel?

Lady A. Do you not purse your brows?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. No!—Do you not bite your lip?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. No?
Nor clench your hand?

Sir Phil. Nor clench my hand!—Why should I?

Lady A. Could you not knock him down?

Sir Phil. I should like to know
For what?

Lady A. You would like to know for what? You are deep—
You are very deep in love. What would you do
With Lady Blanche, suppose you married her?

Sir Phil. Show her to court and town—go everywhere,
And take her with me, that the world might see
She, that rejected scores, was won by me.

Lady A. It is his vanity that loves, not he! [*Aside.*
No enterprise of danger, then, it seems,
I help you in, instructing you the way
To win the heart of lovely Lady Blanche!

Sir Phil. None!

Lady A. Should we fail, you are a sound man still;
There is no fear of dying, falling sick,
Of loss of appetite, or sleep, or aught
Pernicious to your comfort?

Sir Phil. Not the least!

Lady A. If you should fail, you fail; if win, you win!
Indifferent which!

Sir Phil. Nay, I would rather win!

Lady A. [*Aside.*] You ought, that covet it so heartily!

Sir Phil. Now, then, my lesson! What am I to do?

Lady A. 'Tis plain she likes you not, the man you are.

Sir Phil. 'Tis *very* plain.

Lady A. Then be another man.
This outlay of attire—this garniture
Of trimmings and of trinkets—looks not well
In certain women's eyes. It comes too near
Themselves!

Sir Phil. It does so.

Lady A. Change this gear at once.
Dress well, but let it be like other men—
Nothing particular—as if you'd say
“Look at me, ladies! How do you like me?” What
A question for a man! and do not speak
Between a simper and a lisp; it shames
A mouth with a beard; and don't tread mincingly:
'Tis bad enough in a woman,—what, then, in

A man! And in the act of courtesy
Give not your body such a sway, as though
It were a miracle the trunk and limbs
Could hold together; but in all your acts
Be simple and at home. You may gain much
And will lose nothing by it. Do you read?

Sir Phil. Occasionally, yes—by fits and starts.

Lady A. Latin and Greek?

Sir Phil. I have half-forgotten them.

Lady A. Would you renew your memory there with me,
You are welcome. Call and let us read together.

Sir Phil. Dear Lady Anne, how good you are! We are
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Sir Phil. Then let me seal it on your hand.
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Lady A. "Almost," no stop!
Keep ever to "almost," you are safe enough!

Sir Phil. I'll see what keeps my friend!

Lady A. I'll follow you!

Sir Phil. Yet, ere I go, I'll kiss your hand, once more.

[Goes out.]

Lady A. That man has got a heart and does not know it.
Nought of himself, save what his mirror shows him,
He sees. His eyes are shut to what he is,
Therein, where lie his nobler properties.
I'll open them and make a man of him!
Anne! What art thou about? Eschewest thou
His sex and hold'st companionship with him?
In charity!—nothing more! It would be strange
If, teaching him to woo fair Lady Blanche,
I chanced to cause him turn his eyes on me!
At the bare thought how takes my heart alarm!
Well!—Can I help it, comes it to that pass?
It is his own affair! and, touching Blanche,
No heartscald 'tis to her! She loves him not.
My life upon it, not without some cost,
Did Blanche return to sun her eyes again
I' th' blushing cheek of the young jeweller!
I wonder was it fancy, but I thought
Sir Philip blush'd on taking leave of me.
Those blushes are strange things! Upon my life,
One cannot think of them, but one feels strangely!
Well for him he's in love with Lady Blanche.
If bad his chance with her, 'twere worse with me!
And yet I doubt if love for her he feels.
Love her three years, and never once fall sick,
Lack appetite, lose sleep—sound sleep! no dreams
To trouble it!—no hurricane of sighs.
Allow another lay close siege to her
And never purse his brow, nor bite his lip,
Nor clench his hand as he could knock him down!
He cannot be in love with Lady Blanche!

[Goes out.]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Park.**Enter ROBERT and CHARLOTTE.*

Rob. This is the place!—'Tis now almost the hour!
 Now—Lady Blanche!—forget the lady's maid,
 And be the countess. Bear yourself with height;
 Incline your head in lieu of curtseying;
 And that not over much! Be affluent
 In airs!—As many graces as you can!
 Do not forget your friends, Lords John and Stephen;
 Let nothing trace them to the servants' room,
 That falls from thee! And pray you keep in mind
 My baronetcy!—but through all your pride
 Let admiration of this coxcomb shine,
 As it behoves you to be smit with him!
 They come.—Now prove yourself an actress.—Mark!
 We'll pass them first, then turn.—They know their cue.

Enter STEPHEN, JOHN, JACOB.

Steph. and Jacob [*as they cross*]. Good day!

Rob. and Char. [*very stately; crossing and going out*]. Good day!

John. [*Stopping the others.*] Is that the Countess?

Steph. Don't

Look back! 'Tis not the mode. We'll turn anon,
 The odds are ten to one they do the same.

[*They go out, then return; ROBERT and CHARLOTTE returning at the same time—both parties come to a stand.*]

Steph. Good day again, Sir Philip.

Rob. Dear Lord John,

It is, indeed, a fair and sunny day!

Lord Stephen, how are you?—Your servant, sir!

John. Mean you not to present me?

Steph. Stay awhile!

Char. [*half-aloud to ROBERT*]. A monstrous handsome person that, Sir Philip.

John. She speaks, methinks, of me!

Steph. and Jacob. Be sure she does.

John. She is struck! Pray introduce me.—Nothing like Clinching the nail, at once!

Steph. My friend aspires
 To know you, Lady Blanche.

Char. His grace is good!

John. She takes me for a duke!—Your Ladyship O'errates, alas, my rank! I am not a duke.

Char. Alas, not for your lordship, but the rank
Which lacks the pride of such an ornament.

John. She'll have me an earl, if I am not a duke.
I can't account for this!

Steph. 'Tis instinct, sir!
Like natures oft find one another out!
Though yet plain gentleman, I would not say
But you're an earl or duke in embryo!

John. I have my own forebodings thereupon;
'Twere fit I undeceived her,—were it not?
Fair lady! neither duke nor earl am I.

Char. I must believe your looks against your words!

John. Nay, lady, trust my words against my looks!

Rob. Fair Lady Blanche, 'tis even as he says;
Afflict him not with incredulity,
For he is honest, even as well-favour'd!
That noble presence—for it is, indeed,
No less than noble, as the evidence
Of feature, form, and bearing, clear attest—
Belongs to neither duke nor earl, but calls
A commoner its owner!

Char. Do you say so?
Nor duke nor earl!—Is he a baronet?

Rob. Nor yet a baronet!

John. How very strong
The feeling of my quality is upon her!

Char. Who is your friend, and what?

Rob. Lord John, how strangely
You introduced the gentleman! I vow
You never named him; so the ceremony
Must be perform'd again! Fair Lady Blanche,
Permit me to solicit your acquaintance
For Colonel Blount.

Char. For Colonel Blount!—Oh, no!

Rob. Indeed! indeed!

Char. I can't believe it.

Rob. True
As I'm a baronet.

Steph. Or I, a lord.

Jacob. Or I, another; or as your ladyship
Is Lady Blanche.

Char. Deny me Lady Blanche,
Deny that you are lords; Sir Philip, you
That you're a baronet; but tell me not
That gentleman is a colonel!—Colonel!—Fie!
Not he!

John. Does she suspect me, do you think?
I have my fears!

Rob. And so have I!

John. Indeed!

Were it not better, then, I stole away?

Char. A colonel! Fie Sir Philip—fie, Lord John,

Lord Stephen! Play on my credulity!
Palm your friend on me for a colonel!

John. Clear

She penetrates the truth—I must be gone :
Don't stop me, dear Sir Philip.

Char. Colonel—Sir,
Are you a colonel?

John. [*Aside to ROBERT.*] What am I to say?

Rob. Put a bold face upon it!—Say at once
You would not contradict her!

John. [*Stammering.*] 'Twere offence
To say I am the thing your ladyship
Asserts me not to be!

Char. I knew 'twas so!
I knew he was no colonel!

John. I'm undone!

Char. A colonel!—Does he look like one?—Why friends,
You cannot use your eyes! Your friend must be
A general!

John. Give me joy! I breathe again,
Like one half-drown'd that's to the surface brought!
I thank your ladyship for giving me
So high a rank! I am a general—
In prospect!

Rob. Now, you'll do. Propose to walk,
And offer her your arm.

John. Let me take time,
Scarce yet can I fetch breath.

Rob. Love's time is "*now!*"
It brooks not putting off! Love's time is when
It sees 'tis welcome. So *you* seem to be,
And make your most of it. Surprise will take
The fort would mock a siege! Declare yourself,
And straight propose. You know the chance faint heart
Runs with fair lady!

John. Yes.

Rob. Then profit by
The adage. Sure you lack not courage.

John. Courage?
And with a woman!—Be there anything
Wherein I have the mastery beyond
All other things, 'tis courage with a woman!
Your ladyship.

Char. [*Very stately.*] Sir! [*JOHN is thrown off his guard.*]

Steph. What is she about?

Rob. Let her alone. She better knows than you.
Without a little frost, a summer comes
With half a welcome.

Char. Sir? What would you say?
I think, or I'm deceived, you spoke just now.
Well, sir?

John. [*At a loss.*] The day is marvellously fine.

Char. 'Tis June, sir.

John. June! So is it! Then the day
May well be fine without a miracle.

Char. And yet for June the day is fine.

John. 'Twas that
I meant to say!

Char. A breezy day!

John. It is
A breezy day.

Char. Though warm.

John. Though warm.

Char. A day,
Methinks, to walk. Do you like walking, sir?

[*Putting her arm through his.*

John. Much, very much. It is a passion with me!
I love to walk—luxuriate in a walk!

And I walk well! So, please your ladyship,
If there's one thing wherein I most excel,
'Tis walking.

Char. I should like to learn of you.

John. When? I'm ready any time.

Char. Why, now;
Since I have placed my arm—I trust with leave—
In yours.

John. Now be it then. How proud I am
To wait upon your ladyship. I live
Only to please your sex.

Char. You flatter us.

John. Nay, Lady Blanche, 'tis simple honesty—
Mere honesty. If there's a quality
Whereon, above all others, I presume—

Char. You need not tell me, Colonel Blount—I know—
Am sure—could swear it. 'Tis your honesty. [*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*The Antechamber to a Ball-Room.*

Enter LADY BLANCHE.

Lady Bl. He knows me not at all!—His memory,
Far as concerns me, is a perfect blank,
And in his heart not e'en a spark remains,
To mind me of the love he bore me, when
I seem'd a yeoman's maid. She is forgot,
But I'll avenge her! and enslave his heart
Before he knows his danger. Twice or thrice
We spoke in passing. In his eye I saw
No witness to the charms which all allow!—
But soon shall he attest them to his cost.
He comes!—I'll hold him, now, spite of himself;
Find out his vulnerable part. All men
That have free hearts are somewhere vulnerable!—

Propitiate his vanity, his pride,
 Humour—whate'er sways uppermost! and then
 Right to his heart, and win the citadel,
 Which, mine, who lists may take.—He comes!—In thought!

Enter COLONEL BLOUNT.

Well, Colonel Blount, I saw you dance just now.
 Come, sir, sit down, and tell me how you liked
 Your partner, sir—A special friend of mine!

Col. Blount. A lady worthy praise.

Lady Bl. Did you admire
 Her diamonds?—Mine are paragons to them! [*Aside.*
 They are very rich!—Perhaps you do not care
 For gems?—No more do I!—But what of that?
 The world does! What are you and I against
 The world?—I know what you would say! One's self
 May be one's world, or one may light upon
 Another self, outweighs the world! That self
 When I shall find, farewell the world for me!
 The diamonds I could prize were shining thoughts,
 Mined in the heart of one that I could love!
 [*Aside.*] A shaft shot straight and should go home—He's
 struck!

If struck, he should be stung! The deer is charm'd;
 The skill I try on him, I throw away!
 I'll give it over! At the first shot? No,
 The quiver yet is full. What ponders he?

[*Aloud.*] Where are your thoughts, sir?

Col. Blount. Lady, close at hand,
 Whene'er you call them to attend upon you.

Lady Bl. Attendance, willing, waits not to be call'd,
 But still forestalls the summons, still attends!
 Not that I claim such servitude from one
 That's but my new acquaintance! By-and-by
 Perhaps I may be more observed—and more
 May wish to be so. There are scores of men
 Who watch my looks, to worm my wishes from them,
 And do them ere they are told! But what are scores,
 That don't include the unit which we want?
 Found I that unit, farewell scores of scores—
 Nay, farewell millions! It were more to me!
 I think the day will come—nay, I believe
 'Tis nearer than I thought it yesterday,
 When first I made your fair acquaintance, sir!

[*Aside.*] The man's a stock? He cannot hear! I'll try
 If he can see! [*Aloud.*] Where are your thoughts again?

Col. Blount. Here, madam, your retainers.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] Such retainers
 Might wait upon my grandmother for me!
 [*Aloud.*] The lady's forehead you were dancing with,
 They say, a strong resemblance bears to mine.

Does it? 'Tis not so high by half an inch.

[*Aside.*

Well, sir?

Col. Blount. I am thinking, madam.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] Thinking, when
He should be looking! Where are the man's eyes?
Poring upon his feet—and mine beside them!

Col. Blount. I own I cannot see the likeness.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I
Should wonder if you did! [*Aloud.*] I do not think
Our foreheads much alike—mine, I believe,
Somewhat exceeds in height! Do you think it does?

Col. Blount. I think it does, a little.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] Half an inch
A little in the forehead! Pshaw! He knows not
What he is saying! [*Aloud.*] Sir, are you listening to me?

Col. Blount. With all my ears!

Lady Bl. Then all, I fear, all lack!
[*Aside.*] I must transfix him with my arms! They say
That that same lady has surpassing arms!

Col. Blount. She wears surpassing bracelets!

Lady Bl. Like you not
A lady should wear bracelets?

Col. Blount. I like nothing,
Would supersede the handiwork of Nature!
Why mask the graceful wrist? Stopp'd Nature there,
Instead of going on consummately
To the fair finish, what would you have said?
Art is a gracious handmaid to work on,
Where her high mistress, Nature, fails; but thence
Is a poor critic who but shames himself
Improving what's complete!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] He is roused at last!
I have found his vein. He shall not nod again.
[*Aloud.*] My bracelets hurt.—The clasps are very stiff.
I pray you help me take them off! I'll never

Wear them again.—Now, sir, your eyes are mine. [*Aside.*]

Col. Blount. [*Holding her hand, and contemplating the bracelet.*] 'Tis wonderful!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] He perches and is limed!—My saucy
linnet!

How light you made just now of the poor bush,
A spray of which has caught you!

Col. Blount. [*Still holding, &c.*] Art, beat that!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] She can't!

Col. Blount. [*Still holding her hand.*] Or find the thing that
will comprise

Such richness in ten thousand times the space!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] He has found out at last I have an arm!
We'll live in hopes he will find out, anon,
I have a face as well!

Col. Blount. Why, carats thus
Might weigh almost 'gainst kingdoms.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] Carats!—What
Have arms to do with carats?

Col. Blount. Multiply
The grains of each of these a thousand-fold,
And let the bulk grow with them, you will have
The income of an empire in the space
That spans this little wrist!

Lady Bl. Mean you my diamonds?
Sir, you were prentice to a lapidary!

Col. Blount. I know I was.

Lady Bl. Then, having left your craft,
You should forget it.

Col. Blount. 'Twas an honest one;
And, though I loved it not, I blush not for it!

Lady Bl. What kind of man is this?—I am forgetful!

[*Aside.*

I have been ungenerous and ask your pardon!

Col. Blount. Pardon!—O no!—impossible!—a lady
Must never ask for pardon!

Lady Bl. You forgive me?

Col. Blount. I will when you offend me!

Lady Bl. Then we are friends.

Col. Blount. Then I am happy!

Lady Bl. You are a soldier, sir.

Tell me of your exploits. I love brave men,
And hear their deeds with pleasure.

Col. Blount. Had I deeds
To speak of, I had rather others told them.

Lady Bl. Come, sir, what is a battle?

Col. Blount. Glory, madam,
In a just cause; but, at the best, bought dearly
When men destroy their brother men, like them
Framed in the image of their common Maker!

Lady Bl. You would fight again?

Col. Blount. I would, to serve my country!
But should be glad, she needed not such service.
We must have wars, if others will provoke us,
And ever then, I trust, act gallantly,
As men that loathe aggression!—but, I hope,
That golden age will come—'tis promised us,—
When men will fear their God and live like men,
To brutes resigning carnage!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] He o'ertowers me
In all he thinks and feels;—I grow to fear him!
He has his weaknesses!—who is without them?
I'll find them out! He is nothing but a man!—
Soldiers live merrily, they say, in quarters—
[*Aloud.*] You don't refuse your glass!

Col. Blount. Nor yet abuse it;
Unless, perhaps a joyous time or two,
When men make holiday, and open hearts
Would shut, at my defection—yet e'en then,

Keep somewhat within compass!—Do believe me,
And, for my credit, press me not too closely.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] How honest is he! if I prove him further,
I almost fear to find myself a knave!
Yet I'll go on! [*Aloud.*]—Soldiers, I have heard, love play.
You play?

Col. Blount. At times; and then for the suspense
That chance creates—that mistress none can fix,
Who from the sharper's clasp escapes as well
As his who woos her with fair gallantry!
I never gamble.

Lady Bl. How can you refrain?

Col. Blount. With thought of what a paltry act it is!
To say the least, it never can consist
With proper manhood, to enjoy the thing
Was not one's own an hour ago, and chance,
Not his own merit, now has won him! Then,
To wax rich by another's poverty!
My pillow, for the sleep, it gives me,
To rob another man's!—How could I lay
My head upon it?—when I feast, the bread
That loads my board, to leave another's bare,
Ay of a crust perhaps!—How could I touch it?
To go abroad and show the generous sun
My fulness, at such destitution bought,
As robs that sun of light and heat to one
Who yesterday rejoiced in them and bless'd them!
Can he who games have feeling?—Yes, he may!
But better in my mind he had it not!
For I esteem *him* preferable far,
In rate of manhood, that has not a heart;
To him that has, and makes vile use of it!
The one is traitor unto nature, which
The other can't be call'd!—Were it my lot
In some unguarded moment of caprice,
Forgetfulness, or aught that renders one
Unlike one's self—Were it in such a lapse
My lot to win a fortune—ere I slept
I must disgorge my gains, that the next day
I might awake a man!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] He is a man!
Where am I?—What am I about? I fear
I have found a master where I sought a slave.
Heigho!—methinks I could look up to him,
Give him obedience, would he in exchange
Give me his heart!—But is it his to give?
I'll try, yet fear to try!—[*Aloud.*] Soldiers are lovers;
Some men are women-haters—are you one?

Col. Blount. I honour women.

Lady Bl. But I spoke of *loving*.
Say *all* men love; yet, love not all alike.

Some men love lightly, others seriously,
Some last, some change—which way of these love you?

Col. Blount. Indeed you puzzle me!

Lady Bl. You are afraid
To answer!

Col. Blount. No!—If you will take my answer—
I love for ever, if I love at all!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I see!—He never loved the yeoman's maid.
[*Aloud.*] What call you loving?

Col. Blount. Blissful cherishing!
Of our own happiness, that makes a casket
Wherein to keep a treasured other's safe!
He who loves lightly does not love at all;
He only thinks he loves!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] So loved he when
He loved the yeoman's maid!

Col. Blount. There is more of Heaven
In that sweet mood than such a man e'er dream'd of!
Love lightly!—Love is nothing, if its root
Pierces the surface only of the heart!
It must dive to the core, then what will pluck it out
With fibres so embedded! It may happen
The object is forgetful; but what then,
If 'tis found out too late?—The soil hath given
Its richest spirits to the growth—'Tis spent!—
I don't believe that heart can love again!
I am sure it cannot!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] He will steal my heart
Before my face, and all against my will;
Nor give me hold of his.—I must break off
This converse! [*Aloud.*] Sir, I thank you for the time
You have wasted on me! We have talk'd of trifles,
But pleasantly—nay, very pleasantly!
You are going? A good night—a kind good night.
I am glad of your acquaintance—we'll shake hands—
If you please? I have tired you, have I not?—Don't answer;
I know you must deny.

Col. Blount. I do so frankly.

Lady Bl. I thank you frankly then, and so good night.

[COLONEL BLOUNT goes out.]

How changed I feel!—I do not know myself!
Changed? He shall change! I'll bring him to his knee!
I wonder what he thinks of me? I'll plan
A snare for him, shall show me.—He did not kiss
My hand!—and, when I gave it him, almost
I held it to his lips!—One thing is certain,
The yeoman's maid is free to love for him!
How I deceived myself, to think, one moment,
The man was any other than a man!
How very soon I have disabused myself!
To-morrow shall unfold!—not kiss my hand!
I could have sworn he would have kiss'd my hand! [*Goes out.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The House of LADY ANNE.—A Room.*

Enter LADY ANNE.

Lady A. He thrives beyond my hopes! Leave an old maid
Alone to make a man, reforming him
After the fashion, likes her. Women prate
Who talk of conquest while they stoop to love!
What's sway for sway but mere equality
Wherein the party least deserves to rule—
And that, past all dispute, is man, the lord!—
Ne'er rests till he disturbs the perfect poise,
Into his own scale throws his might—that good
Wherein the brute hath mastery o'er him—
And to the beam heaves up the counter one,
To hang there at his will!—Had women but
The thews of men! My very girlhood solved
The riddle of their sovereignty!—Brought up
With two male cubs of cousins, was not I
A likely one the relative deserts
Of women and of men to put to proof?
And didn't I?—I beat them to a stand!
We started all together! Where were they
When I could read?—Why, in the spelling-book!
When I was in subtraction where were they?
A cudgelling their brains to cast a sum
Of ten lines in addition! I could rhyme
My tables backwards, while they fought with pounds,
Shillings and pence, that kept the upper hand
And laugh'd at them for masters! I could parse,
While they on footing of most shy acquaintance
Kept with their parts of speech! In one thing only
I found I met my betters—and e'en there
I tried them, though I came off second best—
I could not beat them when they quarrell'd with me!
Because they held my hands!—They were afraid
To fight me!—But Sir Philip thrives apace,
And all of my performing!—And what pains
He takes to please me, with his air, his gait,
His dress, and most of all his books! How fond
He is of study! I'll do all I can
To encourage him!—At last, he'll make a man!

Enter JANE.

Well, Jane.

Jane. One asks to see your ladyship,
Whose forward manners call his years most backward.
He looks but twenty, may you trust his chin,

But should be thirty and no minute wasted.
 He told his will, nor gave me time to answer,
 But, making of his arms a pillory,
 Began to kiss me, madam! Smack on smack,
 Quick as the clapper of the 'larum bell,
 That ne'er gives o'er before the weight is down,
 Like him who still held on, till out of breath!

Lady A. Hadst not a tongue, girl, to let loose upon him?

Jane. I had, my lady; but my lips were stopp'd.

Lady A. But when your lips were free!

Jane. The harm was done!

Lady A. I will not see him!

Jane. He is at the door!

Lady A. Shut it! Go ring the bell!

Lady Bl. [*Entering, disguised as a man.*] And if she does,
 I'll ring the changes on her lips again.

Lady A. Go call my footmen!

Lady Bl. If she bears them spite,—
 For I shall trounce them soundly, if they come;
 I'll ring the bell; but mark the consequence,
 Footmen or maids, I'll kiss you spite of them,
 Before their faces! Be they maids that come,
 I'll kiss the maids as well.—You see my mood;
 So, be you squeamish, take me by yourself
 And leave the bell alone!

Jane. Shall I ring, my lady?

Lady A. No, don't!

Lady Bl. You hear!—You mark?—You know your cue?
 You have not been yon lady's maid in vain?
 You're of no use!—Why loiter here!—Begone!

Lady A. I can command my maid myself!

Lady Bl. You can!

But better, now, that I command than you;
 For on rebellion clearly is she bent,
 Seeing her absence leaves us two alone!
 By all the arrows ever Cupid shot,
 By all the hearts that ever rued his bow,
 Thou art jealous of thy mistress!

Jane. Sir!

Lady Bl. Thou art!

Thou wouldst we still were standing in the hall;
 Thou wouldst my errand there were still to tell;
 Thou wouldst the vails I gave thee in advance
 Were still to pay—yea, thou wouldst give them back
 To have them paid again! I am willing—but
 There is a time—there is a place—and this
 Is neither place, nor time—avoid thee, then!
 For, were my love the freight of twenty men,
 Yet of one man I cannot well make two,
 And though the lady's beauty tracks the maid's,
 Yet must the lady's self precedence take!
 So, Fondness!—leave the room!—Nay then—

Jane. [*Retreating from LADY BLANCHE.*] I am gone.
[*Goes out.*]

Lady A. How Wrong may thrive by sheer audacity,
While, with amaze, Propriety gives way
Before the thing she scorns!

Lady Bl. Give me a kiss!

Lady A. A kiss!—I never yet gave kiss to man!

Lady Bl. You have kiss'd me many a time! Women forget
Their girlhood days! Their lofty age o'erlooks
Such tiny things!

Lady A. Kiss'd thee!

Lady Bl. When we have stroll'd
Along green lanes in honeysuckle time,
With thrilling throats, mocking the merry birds;
When we have chased each other 'mong the sheaves,
Whose ears have lent us gold to make us crowns;
When, forced to keep the house in winter, of
Our plays we have made fires to warm ourselves;
Or when we have coax'd spring on with primroses,
Till hedge-rows leaved, and trees were all a-bloom!
I have kiss'd thee all these times, not to recount
How often we have sat on the same chair,
Or made a chair of one another's lap,
On the same carpet roll'd—slept in one bed!

Lady A. [*Shrieks.*] Ah!

Lady Bl. You may shriek.—There was no shrieking then—
In short, were comites more than hand or glove,
For still were we together!—Kiss me, Anne!

Lady A. Hoa! help!

Lady Bl. Why don't you know me, simpleton?

Lady A. Blanche!

Lady Bl. [*Bowing.*] At your service.

Lady A. What may this forebode?

Lady Bl. Why, victory! I cannot tell thee now
I came to put my masquerade to proof!

Lady A. 'Tis excellent!

Lady Bl. And so, in verity
You took me for a man!

Lady A. In verity.

Lady Bl. The dress becomes me?—Eh?

Lady A. To admiration!

Lady Bl. Is not my carriage very like a man's?
Have I not caught his tyrant strut?

Lady A. You have!

Lady Bl. The style with which he bears his empty head?

Lady A. You have!

Lady Bl. His frown when he would scare a man?

Lady A. You have!

Lady Bl. His smile when he would please a woman?

Lady A. You have!

Lady Bl. When thus I poise me on one foot,
Planting at ease the other, with one hand

In my breast, the other at my side, with arm
Akimbo, say, you were not in my secret,
Would you not take your oath I was a man?

Lady A. I would!

Lady Bl. 'Twill do! Kiss me, dear Anne, again!

Lady A. I hear a step.

Lady Bl. Keep quiet, will you, Anne!

Jane. [*Running on.*] Madam—O la!

[*Stopping short at seeing LADY ANNE with her head on
LADY BLANCHE'S shoulder, while LADY BLANCHE
kisses her.*]

Lady Bl. How envy stops her breath!
You need not go—We do not mind you—Well!
Your errand—if you have one? Much I doubt
'Twas jealousy that brought you back again!

Lady A. [*Still lolling on LADY BLANCHE.*] What is it,
Jane?

Lady Bl. You see we're quite at home
With one another. Well, what is it, sweetheart!

Jane. Sir Philip Brilliant waits to see my lady.

Lady Bl. Show him up stairs.

Jane. Well, if I ever dream'd—

Lady Bl. She scarce can move for very spite—Begone!

[*JANE goes out.*]

Lady A. What shall be done?

Lady Bl. Done?—Let them show him up!

I am sure I make as good a man as he is!
How changed Sir Philip is!—How grave he grows!
I half believe my empire there is done!—
Why staid you yester' evening from the ball?—
I ne'er saw man so alter'd as Sir Philip!
He thinks! He does! Looks pensive, as I live!
What brings him here, dear Anne?

Lady A. [*Hesitating.*] To learn of me
How to make love to you.

Lady Bl. Learn to make love
To me! How long since you have open'd school?
You ne'er gave lesson on that art, before!
But wit does wonders, on emergency!—
Anne!—They say teachers learn the while they teach!
Take care!—A mercy, where's your old maid's dress?
What do you teach Sir Philip?

Lady A. We read Latin
Together.

Lady Bl. Anne!—I can translate your Latin
Better than you can. Here your pupil comes!

Enter SIR PHILIP.

An o'ergrown boy, methinks, to go to school!
But such a one, if once he takes to tasks,
Makes progress.—Pays he thee in coin or kind?

Coin!—No such item in the schedule broad
Of love's estate, composed of things as light
As sunshine!—air!—the odour air exhales!
The softest sound it lends its limber wing!
Not that it always, yet, escheweth things
More tangible, begot of hands and lips!
Farewell! I never saw so clear a dawn!

Lady A. Dawn? It is day.

Lady Bl. 'Tis dawn, will grow to day!
I tell thee, Anne, 'twas e'en Aurora's self
'That now I spied—that early, modest maid,
Who opes the curtains of the sleeping sun,
And, blushing, flies his gaze! Permit my lips
To press your hand.—Now, mark my bow! [*Aside.*] Adieu!
[*LADY BLANCHE bows to SIR PHILIP, and goes out.*]

Sir Phil. [*Uneasily.*] A handsome youth!

Lady A. Umph! Well enough!

Sir Phil. He seems
An old acquaintance, for he kiss'd your hand
Right lovingly!

Lady A. I have known him rather long.

Sir Phil. I would I had not come!

Lady A. Why, prithee?

Sir Phil. As
My call was out of time.

Lady A. Not so, Sir Philip,
The gentleman was just about to go.

Sir Phil. I am glad I came not sooner.

Lady A. Had you, sir,
'Twere all the same to me—save that the pleasure
Of seeing you had been some minutes older!

Sir Phil. You make me happy.

Lady A. What's the matter with him?
Sir Philip cannot be in love with me!
Yet Lady Blanche would so insinuate—
Hang her! To note my cheek!—It had not burn'd
Except through her!—Why, what a world it is!
What wicked thoughts come into people's heads!
Behoves I watch myself!—We meet too often!
We are too much alone—O far too much!
His tasks must end, if he begins to love!
He has not told me so!—I'll wait till then!
I wonder was he pensive, as she said!
Or did she fancy it? Sir Philip.

Sir Phil. Madam?

Lady A. I pray you, how went off the ball last night?

Sir Phil. Oh, admirably well!

Lady A. I knew it! She
Was jesting! I hate jests! Nine times in ten
They are out of season! 'Twas a pleasant evening?

Sir Phil. Very!

Lady A. I knew it!—What can change a man

In my breast, the other at my side, with arm
Akimbo, say, you were not in my secret,
Would you not take your oath I was a man?

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To press your hand.—Now, mark my bow! [*Aside.*] Adieu!
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The gentleman was just about to go.

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Hang her! To note my cheek!—It had not burn'd
Except through her!—Why, what a world it is!
What wicked thoughts come into people's heads!
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We are too much alone—O far too much!
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He has not told me so!—I'll wait till then!
I wonder was he pensive, as she said!
Or did she fancy it? Sir Philip.

Sir Phil. Madam?

Lady A. I pray you, how went off the ball last night?

Sir Phil. Oh, admirably well!

Lady A. I knew it! She
Was jesting! I hate jests! Nine times in ten
They are out of season! 'Twas a pleasant evening?

Sir Phil. Very!

Lady A. I knew it!—What can change a man

In a moment!—Can he doff himself as soon
As his coat? The days of miracles are over!
And so you pass'd a very pleasant evening?
Whom danced you with—the Countess?

Sir Phil. Nobody.

Lady A. You play'd at cards—who was your partner? She?

Sir Phil. No one.

Lady A. They gave you music?—You can sing:
I have heard you sing a second to the Countess—
A capital second!—I was pleased with it,
That am not moved with trifles!—Did you sing
Last night together?

Sir Phil. No; I sang with no one.

Lady A. A solo then?

Sir Phil. I did not sing at all!

Lady A. Singing is very well in its way; but many
Love conversation better.

Sir Phil. Very many!

Lady A. For mine own part, give me a corner with
A friend I love to talk with, and the song
May hold its peace for me!

Sir Phil. I feel as you do!

Lady A. The Countess can talk well.

Sir Phil. Surprisingly—

Lady A. When she likes it. Was she in the vein last
night?

Sir Phil. I did not note!—I saw not much of her.
I was not in the vein for company.

Lady A. Pray you, Sir Philip, who were at the ball?

Sir Phil. Upon my word, I scarce remember who!
I better could recall who was not there!

Lady A. Who was not there?

Sir Phil. Why, you!

Lady A. [*Aside.*] That sounds like love!
'Tis well I be upon my guard in time!
Repel the foe, before he can make head!
Yet to be like a thing is not to be
The thing itself! It may not, yet, be love.
The enemy I take up arms against
Myself may conjure up!—alarums sound,
Where no attack is meant?—That would be hard
On him!—to lose, without a crime, the friend
He stands so much in need of—then the credit
I must forego, if I forego the task
I took in hand, to make a man of him!
See how he cons his lesson like a boy!
[*Aloud.*] Get the desk ready—I shall follow you.

Sir Phil. Here is a passage, like to master me.
Each word I know, yet can't divine the sense!

Lady A. Show it me. Dear Sir Philip, you forget
Your syntax! Here is an ellipsis, sir!

Sir Phil. An ellipsis?

Lady A. Yes ; look at that genitive !
 It stands alone ! What governs it, Sir Philip ?
Sir Phil. The noun is understood !—I have found the sense ;
 Yet wits more quick, miss seeing things as plain ! [*Sighs.*]
Lady A. [*Aside.*] What does he mean ?
Sir Phil. The want is profit to me,
 That makes me need instructress, such as you are,
 And wins her for me—through compassion, only !
 I progress !—Will gets through a heap of work !
 Dear Lady Anne, I love to read with you ! [*Goes out.*]
Lady A. He loves to read with me ! Were it charity
 If that I construed into loving me ?
 He stands too much in awe of me to love me !
 But, say he does—what business is't of mine ?
 Let him look to it—I have not the fever !
 He caught it not from me ! I'm in sound health,
 Was never half so well ! My mind sees clearer !
 My heart feels lighter. I am twice myself——
 He loves not any one !—or if he does,
 'Tis clear as open day 'tis not the Countess ! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—COLONEL BLOUNT'S *House.*—*A Room.*

Enter COLONEL BLOUNT.

Col. Blount. Mine honour'd parents have I seen at last !
 Received their welcome with their blessing crown'd !
 My brother mocks my search—and so does she
 Whom to have lost, makes loss of fortune's gains.
 Nor hope nor clue to hope ! The house, whereat
 We used to meet, hath other tenant got,
 The former gone they know not whither,—if
 Alive or dead ! For hours and hours I walk
 The streets in vain ! she never crosses me.
 I light on all the world but her I seek !

Enter WILLIAM.

Wil. A gentleman would speak with you.
Col. Blount. His name ?
Wil. I ask'd his name, and in reply he told me
 Again his errand—wonder'd how my master
 Could keep a male attendant at his door,
 And maids to hire in bunches !—any one
 Of whom could draw the bolt as well !—would look
 A thousand times more pleasing—speak more sweetly,
 And, maybe, when a pretty fellow call'd,
 With kisses season answers—then with a stamp
 Dismiss'd me.
Lady Bl. [*Entering, still disguised.*] Colonel Blount, your
 humble servant !
 Place chairs ! excuse the freedom ! I am at home

Whene'er I light upon a gentleman ;
 And you, I know, are one !—You know your place, sir,
 And know, of course, the way to it—which, as
 I take it, is the hall !—you understand me ?
 The hall ! [*WILLIAM goes out.*] Your servant, Colonel Blount,
 again !

Col. Blount. You know me, sir ?

Lady Bl. A man beloved of fame, sir,
 Is known to many, who are strange to him.
 I own that I make bold ! but keep your frown
 Until I give my reason. Colonel Blount,
 Some men make bold through fear, some through the lack
 on't.

Some to seem honest—for the adage runs,
 That knavery puts on a glossy suit
 While honesty goes rough !—and some make bold
 Through lightness of clear hearts, and wantonness
 Of healthy frankness !—I am such a man !
 To free your mind at once from jealousy,
 If not to win your confidence, I tell you
 I wait on you—touching a lady, sir !—
 He takes it very coolly. [*Aside.*] Colonel Blount,
 I wait on you, touching a lady, sir !

Col. Blount. I heard you, sir—I am not deaf.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] As well
 Be deaf as dull. The lady, sir, I am sure,
 By certain signs affects you—and, aware
 How through reserve, or self mistrust, or something,
 Hearts, form'd to mingle, oft miss one another ;
 And being of the lady's blood moreover,
 And knowing you, by fame, a man of honour,
 The secret I have guess'd, sir, I have come
 To tell you, sir.

Col. Blount. Well, sir ?

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] The man's a stock !
 "Well, sir !"—shall I go on ? I will !—but only
 Because I have begun. Whom reckon you
 The beauty of the court ?

Col. Blount. The beauty ?

Lady Bl. [*Off her guard.*] Well ?

Col. Blount. Your patience, sir, I am not skill'd in beauty ;
 Perhaps I may mistake.

Lady Bl. [*Again off her guard.*] You do not know
 The beauty of the court ?

Col. Blount. To say the truth,
 I lay light value upon beauty only.
 Then is it hard to say what beauty is.
 You like the Roman outline, I the Grecian—
 Where's beauty ? Beauty, may I trust report,
 Hath somewhat questionable reputation, too !
 Some say it is intolerably proud ;
 Some, empty—full of nothing but itself ;

Some, by no means good-temper'd—some assert
 'Tis mercenary, and not over honest.
 This may, in part, be spleen, but part is truth.
 Whence am I jealous of what men call beauty;
 And own it—but when beauty, modestly,
 Attends the mind, like a fair handmaiden
 Who knows her place, and serves a noble mistress,
 Then could I worship beauty, sir; for then
 Its proper worth not only doffs no favour,
 But wins enhancement from the worth it waits on!

Lady Bl. Had you not, Colonel Blount, some time or other,
 A falling out with beauty? Come! You had;
 She slighted you, one time—I know she did!
 But 'twas your own fault—I'll be bound it was!
 You did not manage well, sir. You were proud—
 Lack'd patience—maybe, art—and, never dreaming
 That beauty's smiles go oft in masquerade,
 Took one for a frown, and off!—when, had you tarried,
 The thing you thought a frown had proved a smile,
 As the dull morning breeds the sunny day.
 I know the sex! There is not one of them
 But's art in something!

Col. Blount. Do not say, not one!

Lady Bl. [*Forgetting herself.*] I say, not one! What know
 you of the sex?
 What knows this man—that man—or any man—
 Of the sex? Is it not plain to all the world,
 A girl, at fifteen is, in wit a woman?
 And what's a man at twenty but a boy?
 When I was only thirteen—

Col. Blount. Sir!—

Lady Bl. Nay, sir,
 Don't interrupt me!—When I was but thirteen—
 [*Recovering herself.*]

I had an aunt who loved me passing well,
 And lest I should be overmatch'd by women,
 School'd me in all their arts.—You never had
 An aunt like her, nor any other man.
 Whence I disparaged you—I beg your pardon!

Col. Blount. 'Tis granted freely.

Lady Bl. I am beholden to you;
 And, more to be so, would entreat you own,
 If when I challenged you to name just now
 The beauty of the court, you entertain'd not
 Suspicion of the lady?

Col. Blount. Not the least!

Lady Bl. Why, Colonel Blount, you are not blind! You
 know
 Who has the fairest skin, the finest hair—
 The finest features, finest shoulders, arms
 And wrists, and hands.

Col. Blount. Stop, sir!

Lady Bl. I meant to stop;
For if by these you fail to recognise her,
The lady's waist, her ankles, and her feet
Were thrown away upon you!

Col. Blount. I but stopp'd you
To say I know the Countess, Lady Blanche!

Lady Bl. Well, sir?

Col. Blount. Well, sir?

Lady Bl. I come on her account.

Col. Blount. You are welcome, sir, upon your own account!
Your pleasure?

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I could brain him, so I could!
[*Aloud.*] She is the lady whom I spoke of, sir!—
[*Aside.*] Oh, marble! Is it true you see and hear?
I'll speak out plainly! [*Aloud.*] Sir, I think 'tis time
The Countess married?—What think you?

Col. Blount. Indeed
I never thought about it!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I could sell him
To slavery!—'Tis a fine lion, though,
Of which I'd give my eyes to have the taming!
[*Aloud.*] I think 'tis time a woman marries when
She takes a fancy to a man!

Col. Blount. That plight,
Methinks, can scarce befall the Countess, sir!
The lady is enamour'd of herself!
She cannot love another!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I could be
The death of him. [*Aloud.*] What would you wager now,
She is not in love with you? You know the signs
A woman is in love? She has them all, sir!
Thinks much, speaks little, sighs incontinently,
Falls off in appetite, hates company,
Shuns pleasure, loves to pass the time alone,
Makes of one hand a pillow for her cheek,
One, for her heart, of the other—sitting thus
For hours together!—Is not that the picture
Of one in love? And if you come to tears,
She could weep rivers, would she—but give me
The drop, could turn into a flood, but won't—
Hangs on the lid, as though 'twould fall, but doesn't;
Seems as 'twould ever stay there, but is gone
You know not how nor whither!

Col. Blount. You surprise me!
I saw the Countess at the ball last night—
Look'd never woman better!

Lady Bl. Look'd!—

Col. Blount. I know
She paints.

Lady Bl. Paints, sir?

Col. Blount. She does! 'Tis clear
As that she breathes and moves.

Lady Bl. Does that offend you?

Col. Blount. Sir, I'll be frank! I love not simulation,
Nor can believe it may be practised safely
E'en in as small a thing as that we speak of!
'Tis well when she who paints confesses it;
Yet she confesses vanity besides,
Which is *not* well. But, for the other sort,
Women who pass a cheek for what it is not;
I always fear'd the probity, within,
Would follow that without; and thoughts and words
Might wear a hue that was not native to them.
For, if one fraud will blast a character,
What follows but that honesty is perfect,
Or nothing?—holds throughout?—is everywhere
Or nowhere?—I refer to actions!—'Tis
Their actions which determine what men are!
Whate'er of me men see, must be myself;
What I myself can see—I do not mean
To advertise my heart—that is no man's duty—
I have my weakness, I'm not bound to own—
Before it masters me!—but, by my honour,
I take no credit for the grace I have not!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] 'Tis a strange man!—a man of a new species!

[*Aloud.*] Well, sir, she paints!—What else?—What other fault
Do you find with her face? Her colour you dispute,—
Perhaps you'll grant her eyes to be her own,
And they are counted fine ones!

Col. Blount. They are bold ones!

Lady Bl. Bold ones!—You do not like their fire, perhaps?
You should not, could it scorch you! [*Aside.*]

Col. Blount. Not their fire
Do I complain of. 'Tis the mood that lights it
I quarrel with!

Lady Bl. What mood? [*Aside.*] I grow to hate him!

Col. Blount. The mood of the coquette—whom on my honour

I hold 'mongst women an anomaly!
For, much as you disparaged woman, now,
Making her creature more or less of art;
I think, if not in her, then nowhere, else,
Is truthful nature found; for she is framed
Of elements she needs not blush to own,
Being of the temper less of earth than heaven!
And which, perforce, establish her sincere—
Pitiful—modest—and, surpassing all,
Single in love, which is Heaven's prototype!
Her love is love! Therein she is a barque
Sea-worthy 'gainst all weathers!—likelier
Than any prow, that ever quitted port,
To make her voyage, whatso'er the wind,
And, if it blows, to ride the tempest through!

Lady Bl. He is not so bad! How handsome look'd he now,
More than his features warrant him, as though
The charm of beauty lay not in the face!

Col. Blount. Now, what has a coquette, to such a being
Pertaining? Form and feature! Nothing more!
Of woman the least part! She cannot love;
For woman, loving, cannot breathe or move,
Or think, or feel, but love's in all she does!
And, saying that she cannot love, say what
She can do, to her honour will redound?
I know not, sir; do you?

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] Yes; she can hate,
And heartily.—Why, what a fright I took
For a good-looking man!

Col. Blount. The Countess now——

Lady Bl. So please you, we shall speak no more about her!
[*Aside.*] I wonder is he smit with any other—

[*Aloud.*] Excuse a question, sir!—Are you in love?

Col. Blount. Yes, sir, I am—but love, I fear, in vain.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] In vain? Some prude, perhaps, has
snared his heart.

I hope she has! [*Aloud.*] Is not your love return'd?

Col. Blount. I know not!—I would fain believe it was!

Lady Bl. Believe it was?—What! dropp'd she never word
That Hope could make a meal of?

Col. Blount. Never.—Silence

Was still her answer when I press'd my suit.

Lady Bl. A prude, as I'm alive! a thorough prude!
I know what kind of maid your mistress is!
She keeps you at great distance!—plucks away
Her hand, if you press it—if you strive to keep
Her waist in durance, sets the measure of
The room 'twixt you and her; and would you kiss her,
Prepares to shriek!—You should make trial of her!
She understands your humour! I'll be bound
It is a prude you love!

Col. Blount. You wrong her, sir!

She is no prude! No freedom—you have named
I ever took with her, or dared to take!

Lady Bl. Or dared to take! I told you, Colonel Blount,
You knew not women. Dragons, sir, are fables!
So used my aunt to say—and she went further;
Where'er you think you see one, set it down
'Tis whalebone-work and buckram; which, without
The fear of sting or flame, you may engage,
And find more peace than you imagined fury!
Dear Colonel Blount, you love a prude, and think
You have found a miracle of modesty!

Col. Blount. No more, sir!

Lady Bl. Colonel Blount, you love a prude!
'Tis ever thus with men particular;
Men that in squeamishness would outdo women!
That knit a brow at this, and shrug at that,

Take shocks at horrors that amount to nothing ;
Whom nothing will content except perfection,
Which, when at last they find,—they find they are losers
By many a better thing they met before,
And pass'd in chase of it ! I give you joy, sir,
To love a prude.

Col. Blount. Nay, sir—

Lady Bl. Yea, sir ; a prude !

I see her !—She's before me !—Just the eyes,
I know she has !—the use she makes of them !
How fond they are of the ground ! I warrant you
Her thoughts are not of their taste !—Gentle primness !
There is a mouth after your own chaste fancy !
Look at the lips how they hug one another,
Like innocents that cling at thought of parting !—
If I were near them !—What a sober cheek !
Durst ever laughter come there ?—I'll be bound
When 'tis alone, or keeping company
With one that understands it ! Colonel Blount,
I'll court your mistress, and I'll carry her
In a week ! She is a prude, fair Colonel Blount !

Col. Blount. Hold, sir !—On no account that bears not
proof

Asperse the character of her I love !
Say that I boast because I think her fair,
She can spare beauty ! 'Tis her least desert !
But when, in wantonness, you doubt her heart,
Wherein do I, in seriousness, confide—
Which to her beauty is, what, to the earth,
The sun !—the radiant fountain, gives it light ;
You tax my patience past what it can bear,
And all the man in me is up in arms !

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] 'Tis plain he loves—and oh !—how well
he loves !

What is't to me ? I feel a sickness which
I never felt before ! The world I'd give
To see the woman that has conquer'd him ; !
I would I were away !—My feign'd part
I have play'd too long, can scarce keep up, and wish,
And heartily, I ne'er had play'd at all !
Up heart and bear me through !—[*Aloud.*] Good day, fair sir,
I thank you for the audience you've vouchsafed !
But wish you had not loved a prude !

Col. Blount. [*Drawing.*] 'Sdeath, sir !

Lady Bl. [*alarmed.*] Stop !—[*Recovering.*] Draw upon me
under your own roof !

Col. Blount. I am corrected ! You must pardon me ;
But, to keep patience, I must quit the room.

Lady Bl. Farewell, sir—but, believe me, you will find
The lady is a prude !

Col. Blount. Away, sir !

[*Goes out.*]

Lady Bl. Prude !

Jilt, shrew, whate'er she is, would I were she !

[*Goes out.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The House of LADY ANNE.**Enter JANE and LADY BLANCHE.*

Lady Bl. At home to me! Why not at home to all?
What ails her? Is she ill? When saw she last
Sir Philip?

Jane. Yesterday.

Lady Bl. He was not here
To-day? They have quarrell'd. She's in love with him.
I thought 'twould come to this. Play governess
To a pupil with a beard! Pore cheek-by-cheek
Over a book with him! A score to one
The cheeks would meet. I wonder, then, the odds
The lips would keep asunder.

Jane. You have guess'd it.

Lady Bl. He kiss'd her? How know you?

Jane. I saw it, madam,
Entering the study unawares. Their backs
Were towards me. They were sitting, side by side,
Before the reading-desk, and as I oped
The door, he kiss'd her. She was on her feet
In a moment.

Lady Bl. At the kiss or at the door?

Jane. I'll not be positive.

Lady Bl. But you can guess.
Or if you cannot, I can.—She turn'd round.
And then she quarrell'd with the kiss—Go to!
You have made mischief. 'Twere a welcome kiss,
Had not you look'd upon it. Get you gone,
You have wicked eyes! Go send your lady to me.

[*JANE goes out.*]

My heart is gone! The symptoms yesterday
I feign'd, I feel to-day. To mock, to catch!
So runs the saying, and 'tis true. I mock'd—
Dissembled love for the young 'prentice boy,
And what I pass'd before for, now I am—
A maid indeed in love—in love with him
Who, having leap'd the pale that bade him dwell
Aloof from gentle blood, were now my match;
But he has all forgot the yeoman's maid.

*LADY BLANCHE sits disconsolately. Enter LADY ANNE who
draws a chair beside her, and likewise sits.*

Lady A. Well, Blanche.

Lady Bl. Well, Anne. You have quarrell'd with Sir Philip.

Lady A. And you have lost your pains with Colonel Blount.

Lady Bl. We have play'd our cards like fools.

Lady A. I fear we have.

Lady Bl. I know we have. My game is gone.

Lady A. And so
I fear is mine.

Lady Bl. Why, Anne, you're not in love?

Lady A. I doubt I am. Are you in love, dear Blanche?

Lady Bl. I *know* I am. What could possess you, Anne,
To set yourself up at an age like yours
For an old maid? Would you be wiser than
Your mother was? Had she been of your mind,
Where had you been?

Lady A. What could possess you, Blanche,
To give me credit for't, and you yourself
A woman? Think you there was ever one
Who led a life of single blessedness,
And with her will? Blanche, you forgot your mother,
As I did mine. Children had better take
Example from their parents. They are copies
More like to spoil than mend by altering.

Lady Bl. My mother was a wife at twenty-four.
Past that, I'm like to be no wife at all.
This comes of scorning men. How could you think
Women were e'er design'd to live without them?
Look at men's trades, no woman e'er could follow.
A pretty smith you'd make, to blow a bellows
And set an anvil ringing with a hammer.

Lady A. Or you a pretty mason, with a mallet
Shaping a block of freestone with a chisel!

Lady Bl. You could not be a doctor, nor a surgeon.

Lady A. Nor you a lawyer—would you wear the wig?

Lady Bl. I'd starve first. You would never make a sailor.

Lady A. Nor you a soldier.

Lady Bl. I could fight. I'd like
To fight with Colonel Blount.

Lady A. What! has he chafed you?

Lady Bl. Mortally! Of my beauty made as light,
As 'twere a dress would only wear a day!
Averr'd I painted, which, although I did,
Designing not to show, how durst he see?
Denied that I had eyes. Have I not eyes?
Call'd me coquette, anatomized me so,
My heart is all one mortifying sore.
Rankling with pain, which, 'gainst all equity,
I pay him for with love, instead of hate.

Lady A. Why, Blanche, can it be you?

Lady Bl. Can you believe
That love could be constrain'd? That one could love
Against one's will? That one could spite one's self
To love another? Love and hate at once?
I could kill Colonel Blount—could hack him up!
Make mincemeat of him—and could kill myself
For thinking I could do it, he is so full
Of wisdom, goodness, manliness, and grace!

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Against one's will? That one could spite one's self
To love another? Love and hate at once?
I could kill Colonel Blount—could hack him up!
Make mincemeat of him—and could kill myself
For thinking I could do it, he is so full
Of wisdom, goodness, manliness, and grace!

I honour him, admire him, yea, affect him ;
 Yet, more than him, affect the 'prentice boy,
 Whose blushing cheek attested for his heart
 That love was an unknown, unlook'd-for guest,
 Ne'er entertain'd before ; and greeted, now,
 With most confused, overpow'ed welcome !

Lady A. You loved the 'prentice boy!—you thought not
 that

Before.

Lady Bl. Because it seem'd too slight for thought.
 A spark I did not heed, because a spark,
 Never suspected could engender flame,
 Has kept in secret kindling, not found out
 Until the blaze that, now, keeps raging on,
 As from the smother springs the fiercest fire.

Lady A. Well! make confession to him.

Lady Bl. Make my will
 And die! He loves no more! The fire is out!
 Vanish'd!—The very embers blown away!
 The memory even of my features gone,
 At sight of which it bursts with such a glare
 As crimson'd all the welkin of his face,
 And mock'd, as you would think, extinguishing!
 Nor rests it there—another fire is lit
 And blazes to another deity!
 There is the altar, burn'd before for me,
 But to another does the incense rise.
 There is the temple where I once was shrined,
 But to another's image sacred now;
 And mine profaned, unbased, cast down, cast out,
 Never to know its worshipper again!

Lady A. Thou dost not weep.

Lady Bl. I do!

Lady A. You are in love!

Lady Bl. To be sure I am. O! never women more
 Deceived themselves than we did! To believe
 It rested with ourselves to love or not;
 As we, at once, could have and lack a heart;
 As though we were not made of flesh and blood;
 As though we were not women—women—skiff's
 Sure to be toss'd by passion as by waves
 The barque that's launch'd into the open sea!
 Why don't you weep?—you would for sympathy,
 Did you but love as I do.

Lady A. Love as you do!

The loves of twenty women would not make
 The heap of mine.

Lady Bl. And mine among the number?
 Now look you, Anne, the moiety of my love
 Would make your heap.

Lady A. Would make my heap? Its tithe
 Would beat your moiety!

Lady Bl. The measure of it?

Lady A. The earth!

Lady Bl. I'll give thee in the sun and moon!
My love holds measure with the universe!
That mocks all bounds.

Lady A. Ne'er woman loved as I do!

Lady Bl. Ne'er woman loved at all, compared to me!
In me the passion, Anne, is nature! What
I feel, you only have a notion of.
I love by heart; you only, Anne, by rote!
Peace, I will have it so! Upon my life
We are a pair of most renown'd old maids!

Enter JANE.

Jane. So please you, madam, have I now your leave?

Lady A. Leave!—Whither go you?—Oh, I had forgot.
I gave her leave to spend the afternoon
With Charlotte, your fair maid.

Lady Bl. She gives a treat
To-day. She begg'd of me a room or two;
I bade her take the freedom of the house,
And with her friends keep holiday, for she
My foster-sister is, as well as maid!

Lady A. Is't not a wedding, Jane?

Jane. I am bound, my lady,
To secrecy.

Lady A. Pshaw! secrecy to me?

Jane. It is a wedding.

Lady A. And whom marries she?

Jane. They tell me Colonel Blount.

Lady Bl. They slander him!
It is impossible!

Lady A. You have your leave!

Go, Jane.

[*JANE goes out.*]

Lady Bl. [*Calling after JANE.*] But go not forth—wait in the
ante-room

For me! Behoves I further question her!

Lady A. Would you betray yourself?

Lady Bl. Betray myself!—

I have betray'd myself—I am betray'd
By him, by you,—but, most of all, myself!
There's no accounting for the tastes of men!—
I'll see this wedding!

Lady A. Wherefore?

Lady Bl. Know I not!—

To stop the banns!

Lady A. Play rival to thy maid?

Lady Bl. The maid is betters to the mistress now!
I must be present at these nuptials, Anne!
I think it cannot be as she reports!
And yet, again, I doubt, and fear it is!
If so, I'll see him give away his hand,

And to escape detection from the rest,
Attire me as the maid he knew me first—
The yeoman's daughter whom he saw and loved.
Follow me, Anne, and see how all will end.

Lady A. What profit can it bring thee, proves it he?

Lady Bl. I know not what! I scarce know what I do.
I have an aim, yet know not what it is!
I shall expect you, Anne.—Be sure you come!
Anne, turns it out, as much I fear it will,
You'll have to answer for't.

Lady A. For what, dear Blanche?

Lady Bl. That I should love, and die a lost old maid.

[LADY BLANCHE goes out.]

Lady A. Full of her own predicament, she casts
No thought on mine. What will become of me,
Returns not fair Sir Philip to the charge,
Dishearten'd by repulse which I confess
I gave him more in show than earnestness?
That's he!—I know his step!—Come in, Sir Philip!

Enter SIR PHILIP.

Sir Phil. I have made bold to call.

Lady A. I see you have call'd;
I do not see you have made bold!

Sir Phil. I came
To ask your pardon.

Lady A. Oh!—for yesterday.
Yes! I was angry!—you surprised me so!
It was not *what* you did, but *how* you did it.
And then my maid to see it!—What knew she
How you intended it?—Such things—you know
I view them philosophically—go
For what they are meant for. There is a father's kiss,
A brother's kiss, a friend's kiss—and a kiss—
Of another kind.—You guess the kind I mean—
Not like the kiss you gave me yesterday.

Sir Phil. I am not sure of that.—Nay, I'll be honest!

Lady A. Do so, Sir Philip! Honesty is a grace
That makes amends for worlds of awkward things.

Sir Phil. With safety, would I might be honest still.

Lady A. You cannot tell, you know, unless you try!

Sir Phil. Trying, perhaps I fail.

Lady A. Perhaps succeed.
But trying not, be sure you won't succeed.

Sir Phil. Dear Lady Anne, I feel—I know not what.

Lady A. I cannot know unless you tell me what.
How do you feel?

Sir Phil. Most strangely.

Lady A. And how long?

Sir Phil. Why ever since I came to school to you.
I am smitten, Lady Anne.

Lady A. What mean you, sir?

Smitten by me? I have not got the plague!
I don't feel ill!—Can I be ailing, sir?
Do you think me ill?—Do you know anything
About the pulse? Feel mine! How am I?

Sir Phil. Nay,
Allow me time to tell.

Lady A. O! take your time!

Sir Phil. A most sweet hand you have, dear Lady Anne.
Here is a palm, and here are fingers too!

Lady A. I hope there are.

Sir Phil. And joints.

Lady A. Who has not palms,
Fingers, and joints, Sir Philip, that has hands?

Sir Phil. But hands that have all these are not the same!
Some will repel, and some attract the touch!
Some will delight, and some offend, the eye.
This palm hath softness, which the eider-down
Were richer if it knew! Those tapering fingers
Are in their dazzling whiteness, and their shape,
Rays far more precious than e'er crown'd a star,
That penetrate the heart with light and warmth
In which the sun is poor!—and here are joints
That mock the cheek with dimples—play on smiles—
As hinges could be fashion'd of such things!
O there's a world of riches in a hand!
Treasures that count with feeling, thought, and sense,
And most of all—in this one.

Lady A. Pray, Sir Philip,
How is my pulse?

Sir Phil. I cannot find your pulse—Can't tell the pulse—
Know nothing of the pulse.—You are quite well;
But I am very ill, dear Lady Anne.

Lady A. Indeed! Sir Philip. Let me try my skill!—
The hand keeps steady while we feel the pulse—
No signs of ailment here.

Sir Phil. No fever?

Lady A. No:
The even-plodding beat of sober health!
And yet thou mayst be ill.—Art rheumatic?

Sir Phil. No.

Lady A. Art thou subject to the quinsey?

Sir Phil. No.

Lady A. Feel'st rigors now and then—the certain signs
Of brooding mischief!

Sir Phil. No.

Lady A. Hadst ever threat'ning
Of a lock'd jaw?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. Hast thou got a headache?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. If thou'rt ill, it must be somewhere! How
Feel'st thou about the region of the heart?

Sir Phil. 'Tis there, dear Lady Anne; 'tis there!

Lady A. What's there?

Sir Phil. My illness!

Lady A. What, suspect you, is it?

Sir Phil. Love!

Lady A. A dunce!—I might have known it all along!—
Of course!—you are in love with Lady Blanche!

Sir Phil. Nay, Lady Anne, I am in love with you!

Lady A. In love with me! Why, what can I have done
To make you so?

Sir Phil. Nothing, with that intent,
But everything that works to such an end!
Made me—from nothing—which I was,—a man!
Almost a man—your work not yet complete,
But you will crown it, if you marry me.

Lady A. Sir Philip, we shall speak another time.

Sir Phil. That other time will find another yet!
No time like the present, when the cause is good.
And the heart cheerily runs along with it!

Lady A. Give me a day!

Sir Phil. What! with such friends as these
To back me now?

Lady A. What friends?

Sir Phil. Your blushes, lady,
You fain would hide, but cannot!—and your eyes,
O'er which you drop those snowy veils, their lids,
To hide what they would tell—yet, thus, betray;
And your whole form shrinking with consciousness,
Which breathes such fears as fan the lover's hopes.
Dear Lady Anne—

Lady A. Sir Philip, here I am.
And judge me as a man of honour would
The maid he truly loves, and not in vain!
There—you have ta'en possession! Loose me now,
And meet me presently at Lady Blanche's,
Whither by friendship am I summon'd straight!
And should obey, since love's behest is done.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE THE LAST.—A Room in LADY BLANCHE'S.

Enter JOHN.

John. The knot is tied!—I am a married man,
And now I wish myself a single one!
Great people do not sort with me; their ways
Are so uncommon! 'Tis a serious thing
To marry! There, throughout the ceremony,
Sir Philip stood, with handkerchief to mouth,
Stifling his laughter; opposite, his friends,

Lords John and Stephen, lords although they be,
Tittering outright, and nudging one another.
Be this the mode with men of quality,
I know, in those beneath them, it would pass
For monstrously bad breeding! But the worst
Is yet to come!—The bride herself must laugh—
Laugh till her sides shook.—Yea, and I, prepared
With a most lovely kerchief for the tears
I thought she would be drown'd in.—'Pon my life,
Great folks are no great things—but I am married!

Rob. [*Entering, handkerchief to mouth.*] What! Col. Blount
alone!—Why, where's your bride?
Gone to recruit her spirits, I suppose,
After the ceremony! 'Twas a most
Affecting one!

John. You found it so.

Rob. I did.
How near akin are moods most opposite!
I vow there's not a pin's point difference
'Twixt tears and laughter.—Nay, 'tis known to all
Grief laughs as oft as weeps.

John. You mean it falls
Into hysterics.

Rob. As I nearly did
To-day.

John. No!

Rob. Yes, as I'm a baronet!
Upon my life!—O, Colonel Blount, how well
You play'd the bridegroom!—so impressively.
I have seen moving things, but ne'er was moved
Before to-day! 'Twas well the clergyman
Was hackney'd in the ceremony, else
He never had got through with it!

John. Say you so?
This is another version of the story!
And did I play the bridegroom movingly?

Rob. The bride, methinks, might satisfy you there.
I am sure I saw her tremble.

John. Tremble?—Shake!

Rob. Indeed? 'Twas well she did not quite go off.

John. I thought 'twas all with mirth.

Rob. Mirth, Colonel Blount!
I wish you could have seen and heard yourself!
You look'd and spoke!

John. How did I speak and look?
Pathetically?

Rob. Spare me, gentle sir,
I lack your constancy!

John. My constancy!
It is my forte!—If there is one thing, sir,
Wherein, among the things that I excel in,
I quite surpass myself, I may aver

It is my constancy. I see it now !
 I have a way of speaking serious things,
 And doing them, quite of my own !—The bride !

Enter CHARLOTTE, supported by JACOB and STEPHEN.

Permit me, noble friends, how does my wife ?

Char. A little better !

John. Cruel that I was !

The ceremony was too much for you !
 And 'twas my fault ! If I had dream'd of it,
 I should have skipp'd my share, or rhymed it o'er.

Char. I ne'er heard sermon so affected me,
 And I have heard all kinds—charity ones,
 And funeral ones—I may have wept at some,
 But never was o'erpower'd until to-day !

John. Nay, think of it no more.

Char. Each syllable
 Spoke volumes to me.

John. You distress me, love !

Char. I must give vent to what I feel, or drop !

John. Nay then, dear love, speak on.

Char. You certainly
 Were destined for the church.

John. O no !

Char. You were !

John. Upon my honour, love, I tell thee no !

Char. The gown and surplice little know their loss !
 But stop ! said I the church ?—I meant the stage,
 For there they have the art superlative
 Of moving hearts, beleaguering them so,
 Perforce they yield, and to the captors pay
 Tribute incontinent of sighs and tears !

John. Almost I guess the stage had been my forte !

Char. What a tragedian, husband, had you made !

John. I think I had !

Char. Were it a killing part,
 No need of dagger, poison'd chalice, cord !
 Your looks had slain without them.

John. I believe
 The stage has lost a murderer in me !

I won't regret it, though ; come, lady wife,
 We now must feast, so let me lead thee home !

Peter. [*Entering.*] One Master Blount inquires for you below,
 A dame along with him who seems his wife.

John. [*Aside.*] My father and my mother !—Bid them hie
 At noon to-morrow to the place they know
 On Ludgate-hill.—I cannot see them here. [*PETER goes out.*]

Char. Who wants to see you, husband ?

John. Nobody.

A friend of such a sort as one may have
 And know not—one may lose and never miss.

Peter. [*Re-entering.*] He is angry at your answer—there he stands,
And will not quit the door.

John. Most shocking breeding!
Repeat my answer, sir, I cannot see him,

[*COLONEL BLOUNT bursting in, followed by MASTER and MISTRESS BLOUNT: SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT and LADY ANNE, who joins LADY BLANCHE, entering from another part of the chamber.*

Col. Blount. Where is my brother?—may I call him so,
Who keeps his reverend parents at the door!
What means this, John—how comes it? What! Art thou
My elder brother, and instruct'st me thus?
Endurest thou the roof, that is too proud
To shelter these most loved and sacred heads?
Spurn'st not the threshold, that admits thy feet,
And these most hallow'd ones forbids to pass?
Hold'st commerce with the host, that takes thee in,
And those thou ow'st thy being to shuts out?
For surely host, roof, threshold, are to blame;
For sacrilege 'gainst nature like to this,
And not the man with whom I share one blood.

John. There are times, brother, and occasions.

Col. Blount. None
For doing that which damns the precious soul;
And Heaven hath set our parents next itself
For piety, whose slight entaileth death!
Passing along with these most noble friends,
I saw our sire and mother at the door;
Paid them my duty; found they had traced thee hither,
Succeeding on the search that baffled me;
Learn'd the proud message thou hadst sent them down;
And gave't reception, as became their son!
Up to them, brother! no excuses make
For what admits of none; but own thy fault,
And ask for pardon.

Mis. Blount. Husband, tell me now,
Is not a mother far the likeliest
To know her own son? Where is now thy John?
But look upon my Thomas! Gentleman
Or tradesman, he is the same!—would own thee, though
Thou still hadst apron on!—would smile at me,
Call'd I him now "Good Thomas!—Honest lad!—
Kind boy!" as, when he was thy 'prentice, John
I used to do; and he was fond to hear,
And now, I will be bound, would like as well!

Col. Blount. O mother, there are strains in boyhood heard,
As men that thrill us, as none other can!
But come, forgive my brother.

Lady A. [*Coming forward.*] Blanche, a thought
Has struck me. Show thyself. Let him behold
The yeoman's maid again.—He is riveted!

Col. Blount. She is found.

Lady A. [Aside.] My guess was right!

Col. Blount. It must be she!

The simple silent maid, in humble guise,
Whose beauty unpretending, without aid,
Made captive of me!—whom, although I left,
I follow'd still—from whom that gap, they say
Oblivion oft fills up—fatal to love—
Absence—could ne'er divide me, but became
A bed in which the stream of memory ran,
And gather'd flood in flowing.—Art not she?
O turn to me!—O let me see thy face,
The radiant impress of consummate woman,
Superlative from Nature's hand alone,
Who, jealous of her master-work, refused
Prosperity and rank a share in thee,
And made thee daughter, rare, of lowliness!
Will you not turn?

Lady Bl. Yes, will you guarantee
All risk, thereby, I run.

Col. Blount. I do!

Lady Bl. Behold!

Col. Blount. The yeoman's maid! were empress of the
earth,
Did rank by beauty go!

Lady Bl. Know'st thou me not?

Col. Blount. Know I thee not? Ay, by these eyes that see
thee,

These ears that hear thee; and, beyond e'en these,
The heart that feasts on what they see and hear.

Lady Bl. Thou know'st me not?

Col. Blount. Art not the yeoman's maid?

Lady Bl. I am, but was not she.—She was a sprite,
My wayward fancy for illusion raised,
Now marvellously turn'd to flesh and blood,
Through talisman of thy most noble worth!
None see you here beside the yeoman's maid?

Col. Blount. None.

Lady Bl. Let me doff the hood I still kept on.
How say you now, sir?

Col. Blount. Nothing do I see,
Except the yeoman's maid. I see the hood
Still in your modest coif and simple cloak.

Lady Bl. There then.

Col. Blount. The Countess.

Lady Bl. No.—The yeoman's maid.
Spare what I was for what I have become;
If what I have become content thee, take me!
Or take me not, none other e'er shall own me!
Now do I see how wealth and rank themselves,
Estranging Nature from simplicity,
May root her graces up, and in their stead

Plant blemishes ;—but I have wider swerved,
Misled by vanity and pride of sway,
Never suspecting that to hold one heart,
Outwent the boast of winning thousand ones—
A lesson taught by you, and learn'd for life !

Col. Blount. How will the mood the selfsame features
change !

E'en as the air will change the selfsame cheek !

Now, I behold again the maid I loved,
Still love—had loved, for ever, though unfound.

Take thee ? I do !—In all humility,
And thankfulness and love, I take thee, lady !

Charlotte. [*Advancing with her party.*] My mistress.

[*To ROBERT.*]

Rob. Yes ; and there's my master ! Come !
Let's steal away. Come ! Stephen ! Jacob !

Steph. and Jacob. Well ?

Rob. To keep our titles, best we take them hence !

John. Nay, noble friends, tarry awhile, I pray.

My father, mother, and my brother, there,
And those good friends, I question not, will join
My feast in honour of our nuptials with
The Countess Lady Blanche.

Char. [*Running up to JOHN, and placing her hand before his
mouth.*] Stop, Colonel Blount.

Col. Blount. I answer to that name.

Char. No, sir ! I mean
This gentleman.

Col. Blount. Brother ! How were you made
A colonel ?

John. How was I made a colonel ?—by
Rapid promotion.

Sir Phil. Robert, this is you !

Rob. I own 'twas I that dubb'd him colonel, sir,
But with his own good-will.

John. Wife, how is this ?

Char. Dear husband, pardon me,
I am not the Countess, but her lady's-maid.

John. I'll be divorced.

Char. You must be married first.

You have been cheated, sir, but innocently,
At cost alone of your credulity.
Our wedding and our titles, were the same,—
A play to make you wise and pass the hour !

Col. Blount. John, take it in good part.

John. I will do so,

Brother, I am a man to bear a jest.
If there is one thing I am master in
Beyond another, brother, it is that.

Lady Bl. Anne !

Lady A. Blanche ?

Lady Bl. A man is something after all !

[*Coming down.*]

Lady A. Yes, with our help—I made one of Sir Philip.

Lady Bl. Nay, Anne, my eyes are open'd. We require Men's help as well—except for Colonel Blount I ne'er had been a woman. Much I question If you, yourself, are past improving by them.

Lady A. O Blanche!

Lady Bl. O Anne! the older, still the wiser! And won't I titter when you say "obey" Before the parson! Will you say it?

Lady A. Yes.

Lady Bl. And "love" and "honour" too?

Lady A. I will!—Won't you?

Lady Bl. Devoutly, Anne, as e'er I said my prayers. But, Anne, the pass we're come to! Don't you know? How shall we answer to old maids for this?

Lady A. Lay heads together, and concoct a speech. Proceed you.

Lady Bl. Nay, I never open'd school, On which account take you precedence, Anne. I'll help you to the first word—"Ladies!"—well?

Lady A. Ladies—I'll lay the fault upon the men.

[To BLANCHE.]

Lady Bl. [Aside.] They lay the fault first who are most to blame.

Lady A. But for the men we had been still old maids. Accept of our regrets.

Lady Bl. Nay, Anne, tell truth—
We don't regret at all! Let me go on,
I'll make a grace of our defection, Anne.—
Ladies, applaud us martyrs in the cause,
For which, contending with more zeal than heed,
We were ta'en captive by the common foe.
Profit by our example, don't despise
An enemy, though slight; and, if you fail
As we have done, endure it with good grace;
Believe you put on wreaths, in wedlock's chains,
And turn, with loving faith, to flowers the links,
Of which the strongest beggars liberty.

END OF OLD MAIDS.

THE ROSE OF ARRAGON:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

TO NEALE THOMSON, ESQ.,

OF CAMPHILL, GLASGOW.

MY DEAR NEALE THOMSON,

Accept this humble, but sincere Testimony of
Affection and Gratitude, from your faithful Friend and
Servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

29, ALFRED PLACE, BEDFORD SQUARE,
LONDON, 30th May, 1842.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET IN 1842.)

<i>The King of Arragon</i>	Mr. HOWE.	
<i>Alonzo</i> , his Son, married to Olivia	Mr. H. HOLL.	
<i>Andreas</i>	} Courtiers {	Mr. WILSONE.
<i>Carlos</i>		Mr. WORRELL.
<i>Gomez</i>		Mr. WILLIAMS.
<i>Pedro</i> , an Executioner	Mr. GOUGH.	
<i>Ruphino</i> , a Peasant.....	Mr. STUART.	
<i>Alasco</i> , his Son.....	Mr. C. KEAN.	
<i>Almagro</i> }	Alasco's friend, in love {	} Mr. PHELPS.
	with Olivia	
<i>Velasquez</i>	Mr. F. VINING.	
<i>Cortez</i>	Mr. CAULFIELD.	
<i>Nunez</i>	Mr. T. F. MATTHEWS.	
<i>Olivia</i> , Ruphino's Daughter	Mrs. C. KEAN.	
<i>Theresa</i> , an Attendant.		

Officers, Jailor, Peasants, Guards, &c.

THE ROSE OF ARRAGON.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Citadel.*

Enter CARLOS and ANDREAS.

And. The Prince not yet set out!

Car. Not yet. He cleaves
To home with doting on his peasant wife.
His journey towards the frontier, thrice, has he,
From day to day, deferr'd, already; but
The King, impatient of his weak delay,
Brooks it no longer. He departs at noon.

And. Guess you, my lord, the motive of the King
In banishing, as 'twere, at such a time,
The Prince from Saragossa? Hard exchange,
The bridal chamber for the warrior's tent!
The murmurs and the dalliance of love,
For the trump's braying and the clang of steel!
Methinks, the nuptials, he so interrupts,
Can scarce be to his mind!

Car. 'Tis certain, sir,
They are not, and no wonder. The fair Prince
Had bent full low, to choose, for mate, a bride
Of pure Hidalgo blood; how then, the child
Of a peasant—grant her pattern of her sex,
And never match'd throughout the lengthy line
Of Eve's angelic daughters?

And. Such she is!
A noteless maid, that from all note, howe'er
Surpassing, so diverts observance, that
Her perfect beauty and consorting form
Bewilder rivalry itself, and turn
The infidel into a worshipper!

Car. Certain she has no peer; yet, not a match
For the King's son. So thinks the King; and, hence,
The Prince hath honourable banishment.
The army needs no prince, the soldier who
Commands it, prince of leaders!—Do you think
The King stops here? Will he remain content
With banishment of the enamour'd Prince?
Will that remove the *cause* of banishment?

The knot the Prince has tied, will that undo it?
 'Tis but the opening of a drama, sir,
 Of which the master-action is to come!

And. I trust the King, if more he meditates,
 Will act advisedly—Our peasant princess,
 Amongst her class, ranks highest; royal pastures,
 For their extent and stock, her father hath,—
 Is more beloved than envied; hath a son
 Of parts that look with scorn upon his station,
 And fiery soul, more prompt to move than rest!
 The peasantry speak things that mock content—
 Complain of wasting levies, grievous imposts—
 And with their thoughts our citizens chime in.
 The Cortez have been calmer too.—Behoves
 The King be wary how he acts!—A straw
 Has struck the sceptre from as firm a grasp,
 And may do so with his.—The King is here,
 And, lo, the peasant princess, following,
 But borne along, with senses wholly lapsed.
 The parting must be o'er; the Prince, set out.

The KING enters.

King. [*Speaking to persons without.*] Convey her to her
 chamber!—Tend to her!

Advise us, soon as to herself she comes. [*Sees ANDREAS.*
 Andreas return'd! Despatch, indeed, my lord!
 How go the levies on?

And. But tardily,
 I grieve to say; your people lack the heart
 To tender duty quickly.

King. Needs the spur!
 We know to use it! Carlos, take in charge
 The task, whereof we lately gave you hint,
 Soon as her lapsed senses are restored.
 Stay!—Andreas.

And. My liege?

King. To invest our will
 With greater weight, share you the charge with Carlos,
 To rid my palace of its forced guest.
 The countenance I lent this loathed marriage,
 Won from my weakness by my wilful son,
 I now retract—irrevocably annul.
 The contract which, at first, we set our seal to,
 Enforced from us, is render'd valid by
 No after grace. Consent, enforced, is none!
 Soon as her senses from their lapse spring up,
 Declare to her, our mandate, she depart
 From Saragossa; nor return to it,
 On penalty of death! Apparel, gems,
 All gifts of lavish, ill-advised love
 Are hers to keep; nor let her lack for gold.

Meanwhile, my council summon. Kings must give
 Their actions other sanction than their own !
 A peasant share the throne of Arragon ?
 Far better Arragon without a throne ! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A Cottage. In the distance a mountainous country.*

Enter RUPHINO and ALASCO.

Ruph. How sayest now, Alasco ? Art content ?
 Thy overbearing pride is conqueror !
 His private nuptials with thy sister hath
 The Prince Alonzo own'd, in presence of
 His royal father, and convention full
 Of all the noble blood in Arragon ;
 And thou, the peasant-heir unto a stool,
 By proclamation under royal seal—
 For 'tis the same as such, as clear implied—
 Art kinsman to a race whose seats are thrones !
 Art now content ?

Alas. I am.

Ruph. So am not I.

It was coercing, where the will was free
 To do all needful right, and such had done !
 By the rare beauty of your sister won.
 And more by her rare virtue, which repell'd
 The approach of love, till honour came with it,
 Its most ingenuous voucher that 'twas such
 As chariest virgin, free, might entertain ;
 The Prince at once besought her heart and hand,
 Assured by holy rite.

Alas. The Prince was wise.

He knew a virtuous woman, and the way
 She could alone be won ; and took that way ;
 Thereby receiving to his arms a maid
 Whose worth is challenger of Arragon
 To find another maid her moiety !
 Good sooth, I thank the Prince, for honestly
 Affecting my rare sister !—taking care
 Of his health ! By Our Lady, had he breathed to her,
 That's pure as Heaven, one wish or thought of hell,
 And with my cognizance—

Ruph. Alasco, peace !

Supposing wrongs to be by those committed
 Who never gave us ground to think they meant them,
 But proofs, instead, of holiest intents ;
 Is to commit, ourselves, a grievous wrong,
 And surfeit virtue of its bootless deeds,
 That cannot earn it credit ! So oft-times
 Uncharitableness defaulters makes

Of those who, else, were solvent. Think, my son,
If this were told the Prince, how it might change
His aspect towards thy sister; without cloud
And summer brightness now!

Alas. If it were told?

'Tis told!

Ruph. By whom?

Alas. By me!—nor stintingly.

Think you I went a-begging when I went
To claim admission of my sister's rights,
As loud and broad as though she had a king
To father her, being a prince's wife?

Ruph. I was content to know she was his wife—
Her honour so assured, it needed not
Be bruited through the realm—disparaging
To his rank!

Alas. [*greatly indignant*]. Disparaging!

Ruph. Well, boy, how now?

Alas. [*Recollecting himself.*] You are her father, and you
have a right

To speak of your own child.

Ruph. I hope I have.

Alas. Disparaging!—The Prince beheld her first
At a tournament, among the common gazers,
No state to point her out, and yet the mark
Attracted every eye!—he heard the buzz
Of wonder, heralding her matchless beauty,
And, far and near, the concourse summoning
Before the humble seat allotted her!
With but her peasant brother, for a page;
With but a peasant's fillet, for a crown;
With robes, no other than a peasant's tire;
There sat my sister, on that common bench,
Converting it into a radiant throne,
Before which ribbons, stars, and coronets
Press'd, thick, to stand and render homage to her—
Disparaging!

Ruph. I meant to his rank!

Alas. His rank?

Rank's but an eminence whereon we see
Sometimes a tower, sometimes a hovel—makes,
Alike conspicuous, the dignity
Or meanness of the thing that's built upon it!

Ruph. My son, these thoughts—

Alas. Nay, father, hear me on!

I honour rank, when he, who owns, becomes it!
For, here, our stations differ from our clothes—
That these are to our measure made; those not—
Whence marvellous misfitting! Tell me not
Of the Prince's rank, but tell me of his deeds;
Of which I know but little, save that once
He used a peasant's daughter honestly—

That, of its grace diminish'd, when the thing
He felt no shame to do, he fear'd to own!
A private marriage not to be divulged
Till he saw time!—I saw that time was now,
And made him see it, too!

Ruph. 'Twas breach of faith!

Alas. No, father!—what I was no party to,
I no observance owed. My sister's marriage
Did accident, alone, reveal to me.
I found that *she* had won the Prince's love
Who well deserved a prince—he thought she did,
And married her!—If good enough, to wed;
I thought my sister good enough, to own—
And told him so. What instances I used,
And what dissuasion he, it matters not;
The Prince has own'd her, and I am content;
Though I had wish'd her otherwise bestow'd!

Ruph. What! on Almagro? Must I tell thee, son,
The thousandth time, I do not like that man;
Whose God is not the one he prayeth to,
But the worst idol that a man can serve—
Self!—Find the friend he does not profit by,
In pride, or vanity, or avarice,
And I will grant him single in his loves!
Find me the friend he would not sacrifice,
When profit kept not pace with cherishing;
And I will show you him who made Almagro,
Help'd him with brain and heart, and when in need,
Was left there, for a doer.

Alas. Velasquez?

Ruph. Yes!

Alas. Velasquez dotes!

Ruph. He dotes who loves Almagro!
Thou, boy! perceiv'st not he is arrogant?
Whom does he not o'erbear that is too weak,
From gentleness or place, to throw him off?
Of all pernicious things, the very worst
Is large ambition with a narrow soul.
Because it strives for power which, when obtain'd,
'Tis certain to abuse.

Alas. He is generous!

Ruph. And you aye hear of it. Boy, there are men
Who coin by charities, and he is one!
Say what he gives, I'll tell you what he gets
By what he gives; which makes his bounties mites—
His modest bounties, that would shun the light
They still make sure to meet! He is ungrateful!
And he that is ungrateful, can't be generous!

Alas. He is my friend!—I love him! he loves me!

Ruph. Not thee he loves, boy, but thy properties,
That much avail him in the game he plays
To raise himself to popularity.

For, through thy reverend uncle's loving care,
 Thy mind, in youth, was plough'd by diligence,
 And with the seeds of knowledge amply sown,
 That found a kindly soil! Wherein he lacks,
 Thou makest up to him with such a zeal,
 Privation makes him rich!—his little worth—
 For he has worth, as every man hath some—
 Thy magnifying love heaves up for him
 Into a mountain!—make it pass for such—
 That, with the crowd, he grows enormously!
 But he hath vanity voracious as
 The hunger that's disease—which, though 'tis gorged
 Full to the throat, cannot stop craving on!
 Wait till thou stint'st him *there*! He'll fail thee—yea,
 Though he could save thee from a jail or starving!
 Besides, he has the temper of a wolf.
 He has been known to use a woman roughly!
 Hurt her to vent his choler! Such a man
 To get thy sister's hand!

Alas. It were bestow'd
 Better than on the Prince;—disparity
 Of rank, in those that wed, is dangerous.
 In such relation there should be no debts,
 Save those that are reciprocal, and which
 Jars cannot call to mind!—Will the great Prince
 Forget the peasant in the Prince's wife?
 Will life be all one honeymoon? Believe
 The temper is the sweetest—pain will turn it.
 And that is of the body, or the mind;
 And sometimes is so sharp, it won't abide
 A comforter, but flout the care would lull it!
 So, for love's pains, gives love, itself, repulse;
 So, is its dulcet tongue harsh accents taught,
 The least of which breaks its entrancing spell,
 And wakens moods, to love, as clouds to sun!
 Ah then the heart of woman, when she finds
 The force her modest nature underwent
 To make allow'd surrender of her charms,
 Forgotten! for the host of suing wishes
 That won her slow consent, repugnance now,
 Rebuke, reproach!—her lack of wealth or state
 Cast into her teeth by him, who swore to her
 A month ago her value beggar'd kingdoms!
 So should it fare with my dear sister, gods!
 How she would blanch and freeze to find a churl
 In him she loved so dear, she quitted brother
 And father for him! I have had my humours,
 Which her content has paid for, for a moment;
 And when she has reproach'd me, lovingly,
 And found it only chafed me, she has wept—
 But the first tear has thrown me on her neck.
 Would it be so with him?

Ruph. 'Twould not be so
With him thou lov'st,—Almagro.

Alas. No, by my troth,
Because it could not be—Almagro is
Her equal. But behoves the Prince beware
He sports not with her tears, or drops may fall,
Lie nearer to the heart, from those he cherishes!
Let him beware! If there are towns and cities
In Arragon, so are there villages,
Which men inhabit, by the fresh breath of heaven
Nurtured, more hardily, than those who live
In streets and lanes, like convicts pent in mines,
Wasted with sweltering! Her first complaint
Would raise a cry for vengeance that would shake
His father from his throne!

Ruph. Beware, my son;
The man who ever runs into extremes,
Nine times in ten o'erlooks both right and reason,
That, mostly, lie between. This is again
Almagro, who would make thee common foe;
While, for himself, the greatest foe thou hast,
He nourishes the friend. Boy!—Boy!—that man
Will bring thee into straits! For his own ends
He heaps up discontents 'gainst all above him,
To crush them with the weight—not for the hatred
He bears oppression, but for envy of it!
He blames the grievance he himself inflicts not;
But let him have the power, you will see worse
Begot of his own pride and heartlessness!
I say no more, my son!—Beware of him!
Where loiter'd you upon your journey home?
Six weeks you have been gone; ere one was past,
Your sister was proclaim'd the Prince's wife.

Alas. I took a circuit home to see my friends,
And tell what I had done.

Ruph. You're a great man
In Arragon!

Alas. I number many friends!
No word yet from my sister?

Ruph. I expect
Word by Velasquez—Who is he comes yonder?
I see but dimly!—I am very old—
Is it Velasquez?

Alas. Yes, Velasquez 'tis,
And looks like one who has a tale to tell.—

[VELASQUEZ enters hastily—stops short on seeing
ALASCO.

How now, Velasquez?

Velas. Are you there, Alasco?

Alas. Yes, I am here—the matter?

Velas. Nothing!

Alas. Something!

Your steps were hasty,—did you speed for nothing?
 Your breath is scanty,—was it spent for nothing?
 Your looks imply concern,—concern for nothing?
 Your road lay to my father,—seeing me,
 You stopp'd as bound to any other door!
 Was that for nothing?—Ay—and now you stand
 Like one that's balk'd about to take a leap
 Which he felt sure to make—with bated crest,
 With vigour chill'd, wann'd cheek, and sparkless eye!—
 Do all these things mean nothing?—if they do,
 Then means commotion nothing!

Velas. I would be
 Alone with your father.

Alas. So I told you!—Well,
 You are alone with him.

[*Goes out.*]

Ruph. What is't, Velasquez?
 Thou comest from the capital, and thence,
 Or I mistake, thou bringest news for me.

Velas. I do; and therefore wish'd thy son away;
 For he is rash; and, gall'd, will take no road,
 Save that his fury likes.

Ruph. Bring'st thou me news
 Would rouse the fury of my son, Velasquez?
 Thou mak'st me tremble—I am very old;
 Too old to hear bad news!—Don't tell it yet—
 Yet know I what it is.—Alas! my daughter!
 I knew no good could come of this avowal!
 The Prince has used her ill!—and if he has,
 Let him look to it!—Let him!—Threescore years and ten,
 'Gainst youth are but a straw against a staff;
 But, with no better, will I beard the man
 That wrongs my daughter!—I grow strong, Velasquez;
 Am waxing young again, as in my prime!
 Ay, as I live, I am!—I thank thee, Nature!
 To have left me strength!—I yet am worth a blow!—[*Staggers.*
 I reel, Velasquez,—let me lean upon thee.

Velas. The Prince has done no wrong.

Ruph. Heav'n bless the Prince!
 And pardon me that I did wrong to him
 In thinking that he had!—the gracious Prince
 That ever honourably loved my child!
 How could I think that he could do her wrong!
 Don't say I did so.—What's amiss, Velasquez?
 I see 'tis nothing that affects my child:
 Nought can go wrong, while the good Prince is near her.

Velas. He is no longer near her.

Ruph. No!—Not near her?
 My dark surmises are at work again!
 And yet thou say'st he has not wrong'd my child.

Velas. Thy child and he are wrong'd.

Ruph. We'll right them, then
 Who did it?—well?

Velas. The King!

Ruph. How?—How?

Velas. Despatch'd

The Prince to head his armies in the north,
And, when his back was turn'd, convoked his council,
And made them pass a formal act, declaring
The marriage of thy daughter null and void!

Ruph. His right to his throne is void, if he breaks through
Religion and the laws that fence my child!
There are men in Arragon!—Alasco!—I
Have found my strength again! Alasco!—Ay,
I am a peasant, he is a king! Great odds!
But greater have grown even!—Why, Alasco!

Enter ALASCO.

Alas. Here, father.

Ruph. [*recollecting himself at sight of his son*]. O—I call'd
you,—did I?

Alas. Yes.

Ruph. I did it without thinking—Well, Alasco?

Alas. Well, father?

You call'd me, and I know you wanted me.
Speak out, and do not fear my rashness, father;
Though there be cause for heat, I can be cool.
How pale you are! How you are quivering,
And how you gasp for breath! and your eyes look
As, would you let them, they could drown your cheeks!
Oh, my poor father!

Ruph. Your poor sister, boy!—

[*Bursts into tears and falls on ALASCO'S neck.*]

Alas. What of my sister?—Say, Velasquez, for
My father can't, or won't.

Enter ALMAGRO, and a number of other Peasants.

Alma. Alasco—News!

Alas. Ay, now I'll hear it.

Ruph. Tell it you, Velasquez!

Let it not come from him! He will heap fire
On fire.

Velas. Your sister is divorced, Alasco,
By edict of the men who guard the laws.

Alma. Who break the laws!—Yes, the fair Prince Alonzo,—
Royal Alonzo!—weary of his wife—
Though but the waning of the honeymoon,
Only the waning—he were made of ice
Could think it more—on pretext of command
From the King to lead his armies—'Twas contrived—
A piece of villany at the first sight:—left her,
To cast her *honourably* from his bed!

Ruph. Thou liest.

Alma. [*furiously*]. Liest!

Alas. Peace! Almagro!—Nay,

Scowl not upon my father! If you are angry,
Brow me!

Alma. My dear Alasco!

Ruph. Dear!—how long?

The Prince did never yet a double deed!
I would that I could say as much for thee!

Alma. For me! [*Furiously.*]

Alas. Again? May not an old man say
What he likes?

Ruph. I would all young men spoke as true!

Alas. Father! your child is shamed! that horrid word
Written on her brow, thou'dst wish her dead ere read there:
Her!—me!—thyself!—all kith and kin thou hast!
And can thy breast find room for other cause
Of hate, reviling, or revenge? If it can,
Mine can't.

Alma. No more can mine. I have no foes
Save those who wrong thy sister!—none will have!
Give me thy hand, Velasquez, and be friends.

Velas. I could be friends with him bespoke me foul!
I could be friends with him that gave me blow;
But with the friend who fail'd me in the need
He should, and could have help'd; I'll ne'er be friends.

Alma. By hell! Velasquez—[*Furiously.*]

Alas. Do you rage again?
Or did I dream you do? Friends! if not friends
Among yourselves, waive jars awhile for me!
Who is a caitiff, be it not the man
Laws civil and religious cannot bind?
Or what are prayers, if holy rites are threads,
And those they bind, asunder cut, at will?
Or what is Heaven, if of no more esteem
Than what 'tis witness to, to be pronounced
A fraud and nullity? 'Tis sacrilege
If from the altar one abstract a mite,
And the offender dies; yet, by my troth,
It may be want that did the deed, not he,
And hunger breaks, they say, through walls of stone!
But what prompts *him* who mocks the altar, friends?
Pays to the compact 'tis appliance to
No grain of the respect he entertains
For bargains struck by hands 'cross market tables?
What, if not hell?—What should be done to such,
Ay, say he wore a crown?

Alma. He should be stripp'd on't,—
Caged in a mine—yea, mulcted to the cost
Of his life!

Ruph. O no—no—no! He should be made
To render back their rights to those from whom
He wrested them—no more. That's justice, sir;
The rest is vengeance, which belongs to Heaven,
Not sinful things like men!

Alas. We'll master him,
Then deal with him.

Ruph. My son, you will not then
Be masters of yourselves!

Alas. No fear of us!
Come!—To the villages! and every man
Call out his friends, and bring them where we'll meet
In one o'erwhelming mass!

Peasants. Where?

Alas. Let's consult!

[Retires a little with ALMAGRO and the rest.]

Ruph. Back—back, Velasquez, as thou lovest me!
Back to the capital! find out my child!—
Apprise her of what's coming! She may need
To be upon her guard. I'll do as much
For thee. Meanwhile, I'll get me ready, friend,
And follow thee with all the speed I can.

[VELASQUEZ goes out.]

Oh, how I shake!—Storms do not for old trees—
Time was I thought them puffs. I then was young!

Alas. and Alma. At the Cross!

[The rest echo them, exclaiming, "At the Cross!"]

Alma. Now for redress of common grievances—
Burdens should not be borne—We'll cast them off!

Peasants. We will!

Alma. One signal wrong does better than
Tocsins, my friends, to call bold men to arms!

Peasants. To arms!

Ruph. Hear me, my boy!—Alasco! O, my son!—

Alas. I am thy son, and for that very reason
I will not hear thee, while my sister suffers
An injury and a shame.—To arms! to arms!

*[All except RUPHINO rush out, crying, "To arms!
to arms!"] RUPHINO totters into the Cottage.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*In the Citadel.*

Enter the KING and ANDREAS.

King. What! not the jewels that he gave her?

And. No;

Though o'er and o'er assured, in taking them,
She did your highness' will. Her wedding-ring
Was all she kept.

King. No murmurs? No complaints?

And. None ; but, instead, prayers for your highness' health,
And length of prosperous life !

King. She would be thought
A martyr ! She has heard how such have suffer'd,
Blessing their persecutors ; and pretends
To imitate them ! 'Tis the way to make
Misfortunes profit us—especially
With the mean—to whom the pang still brings the wail.
It moves their wonder, and they worship that
They wonder at ! I warrant you she won,
With patient aspect, and undrooping mien,
More hearts to pity her, as she went forth,
Than tears and wringing of the hands had done !

And. She went not forth by the chief portal, but
A private one, and thereby shunn'd the crowd,
That fill'd the street with ferment.

King. By your care,
Or by her own ?

And. Her own, my gracious liege.

King. 'Twas much forbearance ; but the girl is shrewd ;
She knows unlikely things may come to pass ;
The hardest heart may melt ; my mind may change
To bind more fast, what now I have unbound ;
Whereto she takes good heed no hindrance come,
Through lack of patience, now ! She is very wise !
Her beauty, past compare, must all allow.
Can she be blind to what all others see ?
And can she see it, without prizing it ?
The homeliest maid, I ever met with, thought
More of herself than she would seem to do.
She is very wise !—Aught said she of the Prince ?

And. No, not a word ; but paused before she went,
Gazing upon his portrait strainingly.
I think, but am not sure, at first she wept,
For past her eyes her kerchief once she drew ;
'Twas then put up, and, to her other hand,
The hand that held it, join'd in fervent clasp ;
And thus she stood, the spirit, as I thought,
Of very prayer, itself, personified ;
For o'er her face the cast which masters give,
To paint the act of beatific trance,
Spread, flooding it with light ! whate'er she thought,
The words were in her heart.—She breathed no sound
Till she had made an end ; as I inferr'd
From a deep sigh she drew ; whereon she turn'd
With aspect heavenly calm, as worshippers,
That rise refresh'd, from the renewing altar.

King. You speak this heartily !

And. I speak the truth !

King. You say the Cortez, in last night's debate,
Made question of my faculty to break
This most pernicious marriage ?

And. Many spoke
To that effect,—made it a pretext for
Rehearsal of old grievances.

King. What *they*
Call grievances!—Was there much heat?

And. There was:
But that within doors, cool to that without,
Where up and down the streets the people ran,
Women and men, but women frequentest,
Crying to one another, as they pass'd,
“The Rose of Arragon!”—“Fall Arragon
Ere she be trampled on!”—“No Rose, no King!”

King. Suspect you danger?

And. Yes, when discontents
Draw women out of doors, revolt is strong.

King. The garrison is under arms?

And. It is,
And, every quarter of an hour, patrols
Are sent into the town, to go the rounds,
And keep in check disorder, by the show
Of preparation and alacrity!

King. You have not yet gone forth?

And. Not yet, my liege;
I wait for Carlos, to report the state
And prospect of affairs. It is his hour—
And he at hand as soon.

King. Well, Carlos?

Enter CARLOS.

Car. All
Was quiet through the night; and, as the night,
I would aver the day were like to pass,
But for unwonted calm. An hour, or more,
'Tis past the time the shopkeeper should open—
And he is up, but bides with shutters closed;
The craft of the artificer stands still,
And yet he is awake since break of day—
The cries are silent on the crowdless streets;
The very churls, whose meals on errands wait,
Stand not upon the watch for customers,
And breakfast-time at hand! 'Tis market-day—
And to the gates no troops of peasants come,
With garden-viands, flocks, or herds, or aught
Within the list of rustic merchandise.
None is at work, save the tired sentinel
Who paces, out and back, his beat; on watch
'Gainst dangers yet unseen.

King. It cannot be!

Car. What cannot be, my liege?

King. That they design
Revolt!

And. There's eight o'clock.

Lady A. Yes, with our help—I made one of Sir Philip.

Lady Bl. Nay, Anne, my eyes are open'd. We require Men's help as well—except for Colonel Blount I ne'er had been a woman. Much I question If you, yourself, are past improving by them.

Lady A. O Blanche!

Lady Bl. O Anne! the older, still the wiser! And won't I titter when you say "obey" Before the parson! Will you say it?

Lady A. Yes.

Lady Bl. And "love" and "honour" too?

Lady A. I will!—Won't you?

Lady Bl. Devoutly, Anne, as e'er I said my prayers. But, Anne, the pass we're come to! Don't you know? How shall we answer to old maids for this?

Lady A. Lay heads together, and concoct a speech. Proceed you.

Lady Bl. Nay, I never open'd school, On which account take you precedence, Anne. I'll help you to the first word—"Ladies!"—well?

Lady A. Ladies—I'll lay the fault upon the men.

[To BLANCHE.]

Lady Bl. [Aside.] They lay the fault first who are most to blame.

Lady A. But for the men we had been still old maids. Accept of our regrets.

Lady Bl. Nay, Anne, tell truth—
We don't regret at all! Let me go on,
I'll make a grace of our defection, Anne.—
Ladies, applaud us martyrs in the cause,
For which, contending with more zeal than heed,
We were ta'en captive by the common foe.
Profit by our example, don't despise
An enemy, though slight; and, if you fail
As we have done, endure it with good grace;
Believe you put on wreaths, in wedlock's chains,
And turn, with loving faith, to flowers the links,
Of which the strongest beggars liberty.

END OF OLD MAIDS.

THE ROSE OF ARRAGON:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

TO NEALE THOMSON, ESQ.,

OF CAMPHILL, GLASGOW.

MY DEAR NEALE THOMSON,

Accept this humble, but sincere Testimony of
Affection and Gratitude, from your faithful Friend and
Servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

29, ALFRED PLACE, BEDFORD SQUARE,
LONDON, 30th May, 1842.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET IN 1842.)

<i>The King of Arragon</i>	Mr. HOWE.	
<i>Alonzo</i> , his Son, married to Olivia	Mr. H. HOLL.	
<i>Andreas</i>	} Courtiers {	
<i>Carlos</i>		Mr. WILSONE.
<i>Gomez</i>		Mr. WORRELL.
	Mr. WILLIAMS.	
<i>Pedro</i> , an Executioner	Mr. GOUGH.	
<i>Ruphino</i> , a Peasant.....	Mr. STUART.	
<i>Alasco</i> , his Son.....	Mr. C. KEAN.	
<i>Almagro</i> {	} Alasco's friend, in love with Olivia {	
		Mr. PHELPS.
<i>Velasquez</i>	Mr. F. VINING.	
<i>Cortez</i>	Mr. CAULFIELD.	
<i>Nunez</i>	Mr. T. F. MATTHEWS.	
<i>Olivia</i> , Ruphino's Daughter		
<i>Theresa</i> , an Attendant.		

Officers, Jailer, Peasants, Guards, &c.

THE ROSE OF ARRAGON.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Citadel.*

Enter CARLOS and ANDREAS.

And. The Prince not yet set out!

Car. Not yet. He cleaves
To home with doting on his peasant wife.
His journey towards the frontier, thrice, has he,
From day to day, deferr'd, already; but
The King, impatient of his weak delay,
Brooks it no longer. He departs at noon.

And. Guess you, my lord, the motive of the King
In banishing, as 'twere, at such a time,
The Prince from Saragossa? Hard exchange,
The bridal chamber for the warrior's tent!
The murmurs and the dalliance of love,
For the trump's braying and the clang of steel!
Methinks, the nuptials, he so interrupts,
Can scarce be to his mind!

Car. 'Tis certain, sir,
They are not, and no wonder. The fair Prince
Had bent full low, to choose, for mate, a bride
Of pure Hidalgo blood; how then, the child
Of a peasant—grant her pattern of her sex,
And never match'd throughout the lengthy line
Of Eve's angelic daughters?

And. Such she is!
A noteless maid, that from all note, howe'er
Surpassing, so diverts observance, that
Her perfect beauty and consorting form
Bewilder rivalry itself, and turn
The infidel into a worshipper!

Car. Certain she has no peer; yet, not a match
For the King's son. So thinks the King; and, hence,
The Prince hath honourable banishment.
The army needs no prince, the soldier who
Commands it, prince of leaders!—Do you think
The King stops here? Will he remain content
With banishment of the enamour'd Prince?
Will that remove the *cause* of banishment?

The knot the Prince has tied, will that undo it?
 'Tis but the opening of a drama, sir,
 Of which the master-action is to come!

And. I trust the King, if more he meditates,
 Will act advisedly—Our peasant princess,
 Amongst her class, ranks highest; royal pastures,
 For their extent and stock, her father hath,—
 Is more beloved than envied; hath a son
 Of parts that look with scorn upon his station,
 And fiery soul, more prompt to move than rest!
 The peasantry speak things that mock content—
 Complain of wasting levies, grievous imposts—
 And with their thoughts our citizens chime in.
 The Cortez have been calmer too.—Behoves
 The King be wary how he acts!—A straw
 Has struck the sceptre from as firm a grasp,
 And may do so with his.—The King is here,
 And, lo, the peasant princess, following,
 But borne along, with senses wholly lapsed.
 The parting must be o'er; the Prince, set out.

The KING enters.

King. [*Speaking to persons without.*] Convey her to her
 chamber!—Tend to her!

Advise us, soon as to herself she comes. [*Sees ANDREAS.*
 Andreas return'd! Despatch, indeed, my lord!
 How go the levies on?

And. But tardily,
 I grieve to say; your people lack the heart
 To tender duty quickly.

King. Needs the spur!
 We know to use it! Carlos, take in charge
 The task, whereof we lately gave you hint,
 Soon as her lapsed senses are restored.
 Stay!—Andreas.

And. My liege?

King. To invest our will
 With greater weight, share you the charge with Carlos,
 To rid my palace of its forced guest.
 The countenance I lent this loathed marriage,
 Won from my weakness by my wilful son,
 I now retract—irrevocably annul.
 The contract which, at first, we set our seal to,
 Enforced from us, is render'd valid by
 No after grace. Consent, enforced, is none!
 Soon as her senses from their lapse spring up,
 Declare to her, our mandate, she depart
 From Saragossa; nor return to it,
 On penalty of death! Apparel, gems,
 All gifts of lavish, ill-advised love
 Are hers to keep; nor let her lack for gold.

Meanwhile, my council summon. Kings must give
 Their actions other sanction than their own !
 A peasant share the throne of Arragon ?
 Far better Arragon without a throne ! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A Cottage. In the distance a mountainous country.*

Enter RUPHINO and ALASCO.

Ruph. How sayest now, Alasco ? Art content ?
 Thy overbearing pride is conqueror !
 His private nuptials with thy sister hath
 The Prince Alonzo own'd, in presence of
 His royal father, and convention full
 Of all the noble blood in Arragon ;
 And thou, the peasant-heir unto a stool,
 By proclamation under royal seal—
 For 'tis the same as such, as clear implied—
 Art kinsman to a race whose seats are thrones !
 Art now content ?

Alas. I am.

Ruph. So am not I.

It was coercing, where the will was free
 To do all needful right, and such had done !
 By the rare beauty of your sister won.
 And more by her rare virtue, which repell'd
 The approach of love, till honour came with it,
 Its most ingenuous voucher that 'twas such
 As chariest virgin, free, might entertain ;
 The Prince at once besought her heart and hand,
 Assured by holy rite.

Alas. The Prince was wise.

He knew a virtuous woman, and the way
 She could alone be won ; and took that way ;
 Thereby receiving to his arms a maid
 Whose worth is challenger of Arragon
 To find another maid her moiety !
 Good sooth, I thank the Prince, for honestly
 Affecting my rare sister !—taking care
 Of his health ! By Our Lady, had he breathed to her,
 That's pure as Heaven, one wish or thought of hell,
 And with my cognizance—

Ruph. Alasco, peace !

Supposing wrongs to be by those committed
 Who never gave us ground to think they meant them,
 But proofs, instead, of holiest intents ;
 Is to commit, ourselves, a grievous wrong,
 And surfeit virtue of its bootless deeds,
 That cannot earn it credit ! So oft-times
 Uncharitableness defaulters makes

Of those who, else, were solvent. Think, my son,
If this were told the Prince, how it might change
His aspect towards thy sister; without cloud
And summer brightness now!

Alas. If it were told?

'Tis told!

Ruph. By whom?

Alas. By me!—nor stintingly.

Think you I went a-begging when I went
To claim admission of my sister's rights,
As loud and broad as though she had a king
To father her, being a prince's wife?

Ruph. I was content to know she was his wife—
Her honour so assured, it needed not
Be bruited through the realm—disparaging
To his rank!

Alas. [*greatly indignant*]. Disparaging!

Ruph. Well, boy, how now?

Alas. [*Recollecting himself.*] You are her father, and you
have a right

To speak of your own child.

Ruph. I hope I have.

Alas. Disparaging!—The Prince beheld her first
At a tournament, among the common gazers,
No state to point her out, and yet the mark
Attracted every eye!—he heard the buzz
Of wonder, heralding her matchless beauty,
And, far and near, the concourse summoning
Before the humble seat allotted her!
With but her peasant brother, for a page;
With but a peasant's fillet, for a crown;
With robes, no other than a peasant's tire;
There sat my sister, on that common bench,
Converting it into a radiant throne,
Before which ribbons, stars, and coronets
Press'd, thick, to stand and render homage to her—
Disparaging!

Ruph. I meant to his rank!

Alas. His rank?

Rank's but an eminence whereon we see
Sometimes a tower, sometimes a hovel—makes,
Alike conspicuous, the dignity
Or meanness of the thing that's built upon it!

Ruph. My son, these thoughts—

Alas. Nay, father, hear me on!

I honour rank, when he, who owns, becomes it!
For, here, our stations differ from our clothes—
That these are to our measure made; those not—
Whence marvellous misfitting! Tell me not
Of the Prince's rank, but tell me of his deeds;
Of which I know but little, save that once
He used a peasant's daughter honestly—

That, of its grace diminish'd, when the thing
He felt no shame to do, he fear'd to own!
A private marriage not to be divulged
Till he saw time!—I saw that time was now,
And made him see it, too!

Ruph. 'Twas breach of faith!

Alas. No, father!—what I was no party to,
I no observance owed. My sister's marriage
Did accident, alone, reveal to me.
I found that *she* had won the Prince's love
Who well deserved a prince—he thought she did,
And married her!—If good enough, to wed;
I thought my sister good enough, to own—
And told him so. What instances I used,
And what dissuasion he, it matters not;
The Prince has own'd her, and I am content;
Though I had wish'd her otherwise bestow'd!

Ruph. What! on Almagro? Must I tell thee, son,
The thousandth time, I do not like that man;
Whose God is not the one he prayeth to,
But the worst idol that a man can serve—
Self!—Find the friend he does not profit by,
In pride, or vanity, or avarice,
And I will grant him single in his loves!
Find me the friend he would not sacrifice,
When profit kept not pace with cherishing;
And I will show you him who made Almagro,
Help'd him with brain and heart, and when in need,
Was left there, for a doit.

Alas. Velasquez?

Ruph. Yes!

Alas. Velasquez dotes!

Ruph. He dotes who loves Almagro!
Thou, boy! perceiv'st not he is arrogant?
Whom does he not o'erbear that is too weak,
From gentleness or place, to throw him off?
Of all pernicious things, the very worst
Is large ambition with a narrow soul.
Because it strives for power which, when obtain'd,
'Tis certain to abuse.

Alas. He is generous!

Ruph. And you aye hear of it. Boy, there are men
Who coin by charities, and he is one!
Say what he gives, I'll tell you what he gets
By what he gives; which makes his bounties mites—
His modest bounties, that would shun the light
They still make sure to meet! He is ungrateful!
And he that is ungrateful, can't be generous!

Alas. He is my friend!—I love him! he loves me!

Ruph. Not thee he loves, boy, but thy properties,
That much avail him in the game he plays
To raise himself to popularity.

For, through thy reverend uncle's loving care,
 Thy mind, in youth, was plough'd by diligence,
 And with the seeds of knowledge amply sown,
 That found a kindly soil! Wherein he lacks,
 Thou makest up to him with such a zeal,
 Privation makes him rich!—his little worth—
 For he has worth, as every man hath some—
 Thy magnifying love heaves up for him
 Into a mountain!—make it pass for such—
 That, with the crowd, he grows enormously!
 But he hath vanity voracious as
 The hunger that's disease—which, though 'tis gorged
 Full to the throat, cannot stop craving on!
 Wait till thou stint'st him *there*! He'll fail thee—yea,
 Though he could save thee from a jail or starving!
 Besides, he has the temper of a wolf.
 He has been known to use a woman roughly!
 Hurt her to vent his choler! Such a man
 To get thy sister's hand!

Alas. It were bestow'd
 Better than on the Prince;—disparity
 Of rank, in those that wed, is dangerous.
 In such relation there should be no debts,
 Save those that are reciprocal, and which
 Jars cannot call to mind!—Will the great Prince
 Forget the peasant in the Prince's wife?
 Will life be all one honeymoon? Believe
 The temper is the sweetest—pain will turn it.
 And that is of the body, or the mind;
 And sometimes is so sharp, it won't abide
 A comforter, but flout the care would lull it!
 So, for love's pains, gives love, itself, repulse;
 So, is its dulcet tongue harsh accents taught,
 The least of which breaks its entrancing spell,
 And wakens moods, to love, as clouds to sun!
 Ah then the heart of woman, when she finds
 The force her modest nature underwent
 To make allow'd surrender of her charms,
 Forgotten! for the host of suing wishes
 That won her slow consent, repugnance now,
 Rebuke, reproach!—her lack of wealth or state
 Cast into her teeth by him, who swore to her
 A month ago her value beggar'd kingdoms!
 So should it fare with my dear sister, gods!
 How she would blanch and freeze to find a churl
 In him she loved so dear, she quitted brother
 And father for him! I have had my humours,
 Which her content has paid for, for a moment;
 And when she has reproach'd me, lovingly,
 And found it only chafed me, she has wept—
 But the first tear has thrown me on her neck.
 Would it be so with him?

Ruph. 'Twould not be so
With him thou lov'st,—Almagro.

Alas. No, by my troth,
Because it could not be—Almagro is
Her equal. But behoves the Prince beware
He sports not with her tears, or drops may fall,
Lie nearer to the heart, from those he cherishes!
Let him beware! If there are towns and cities
In Arragon, so are there villages,
Which men inhabit, by the fresh breath of heaven
Nurtured, more hardily, than those who live
In streets and lanes, like convicts pent in mines,
Wasted with sweltering! Her first complaint
Would raise a cry for vengeance that would shake
His father from his throne!

Ruph. Beware, my son;
The man who ever runs into extremes,
Nine times in ten o'erlooks both right and reason,
That, mostly, lie between. This is again
Almagro, who would make thee common foe;
While, for himself, the greatest foe thou hast,
He nourishes the friend. Boy!—Boy!—that man
Will bring thee into straits! For his own ends
He heaps up discontents 'gainst all above him,
To crush them with the weight—not for the hatred
He bears oppression, but for envy of it!
He blames the grievance he himself inflicts not;
But let him have the power, you will see worse
Begot of his own pride and heartlessness!
I say no more, my son!—Beware of him!
Where loiter'd you upon your journey home?
Six weeks you have been gone; ere one was past,
Your sister was proclaim'd the Prince's wife.

Alas. I took a circuit home to see my friends,
And tell what I had done.

Ruph. You're a great man
In Arragon!

Alas. I number many friends!
No word yet from my sister?

Ruph. I expect
Word by Velasquez—Who is he comes yonder?
I see but dimly!—I am very old—
Is it Velasquez?

Alas. Yes, Velasquez 'tis,
And looks like one who has a tale to tell.—

[VELASQUEZ enters hastily—stops short on seeing
ALASCO.

How now, Velasquez?

Velas. Are you there, Alasco?

Alas. Yes, I am here—the matter?

Velas. Nothing!

Alas. Something!

Your steps were hasty,—did you speed for nothing?
 Your breath is scanty,—was it spent for nothing?
 Your looks imply concern,—concern for nothing?
 Your road lay to my father,—seeing me,
 You stopp'd as bound to any other door!
 Was that for nothing?—Ay—and now you stand
 Like one that's balk'd about to take a leap
 Which he felt sure to make—with bated crest,
 With vigour chill'd, wann'd cheek, and sparkless eye!—
 Do all these things mean nothing?—if they do,
 Then means commotion nothing!

Velas. I would be
 Alone with your father.

Alas. So I told you!—Well,
 You are alone with him.

[*Goes out.*]

Ruph. What is't, Velasquez?
 Thou comest from the capital, and thence,
 Or I mistake, thou bringest news for me.

Velas. I do; and therefore wish'd thy son away;
 For he is rash; and, gall'd, will take no road,
 Save that his fury likes.

Ruph. Bring'st thou me news
 Would rouse the fury of my son, Velasquez?
 Thou mak'st me tremble—I am very old;
 Too old to hear bad news!—Don't tell it yet—
 Yet know I what it is.—Alas! my daughter!
 I knew no good could come of this avowal!
 The Prince has used her ill!—and if he has,
 Let him look to it!—Let him!—Threescore years and ten,
 'Gainst youth are but a straw against a staff;
 But, with no better, will I beard the man
 That wrongs my daughter!—I grow strong, Velasquez;
 Am waxing young again, as in my prime!
 Ay, as I live, I am!—I thank thee, Nature!
 To have left me strength!—I yet am worth a blow!—[*Staggers.*]
 I reel, Velasquez,—let me lean upon thee.

Velas. The Prince has done no wrong.

Ruph. Heav'n bless the Prince!
 And pardon me that I did wrong to him
 In thinking that he had!—the gracious Prince
 That ever honourably loved my child!
 How could I think that he could do her wrong!
 Don't say I did so.—What's amiss, Velasquez?
 I see 'tis nothing that affects my child:
 Nought can go wrong, while the good Prince is near her.

Velas. He is no longer near her.

Ruph. No!—Not near her?
 My dark surmises are at work again!
 And yet thou say'st he has not wrong'd my child.

Velas. Thy child and he are wrong'd.

Ruph. We'll right them, then
 Who did it?—well?

Velas. The King!

Ruph. How?—How?

Velas. Despatch'd

The Prince to head his armies in the north,
And, when his back was turn'd, convoked his council,
And made them pass a formal act, declaring
The marriage of thy daughter null and void!

Ruph. His right to his throne is void, if he breaks through
Religion and the laws that fence my child!

There are men in Arragon!—Alasco!—I
Have found my strength again! Alasco!—Ay,
I am a peasant, he is a king! Great odds!
But greater have grown even!—Why, Alasco!

Enter ALASCO.

Alas. Here, father.

Ruph. [*recollecting himself at sight of his son*]. O—I call'd
you,—did I?

Alas. Yes.

Ruph. I did it without thinking—Well, Alasco?

Alas. Well, father?

You call'd me, and I know you wanted me.
Speak out, and do not fear my rashness, father;
Though there be cause for heat, I can be cool.
How pale you are! How you are quivering,
And how you gasp for breath! and your eyes look
As, would you let them, they could drown your cheeks!
Oh, my poor father!

Ruph. Your poor sister, boy!—

[*Bursts into tears and falls on ALASCO's neck.*]

Alas. What of my sister?—Say, Velasquez, for
My father can't, or won't.

Enter ALMAGRO, and a number of other Peasants.

Alma. Alasco—News!

Alas. Ay, now I'll hear it.

Ruph. Tell it you, Velasquez!

Let it not come from him! He will heap fire
On fire.

Velas. Your sister is divorced, Alasco,
By edict of the men who guard the laws.

Alma. Who break the laws!—Yes, the fair Prince Alonzo,—
Royal Alonzo!—weary of his wife—
Though but the waning of the honeymoon,
Only the waning—he were made of ice
Could think it more—on pretext of command
From the King to lead his armies—'Twas contrived—
A piece of villany at the first sight:—left her,
To cast her *honourably* from his bed!

Ruph. Thou liest.

Alma. [*furiously*]. Liest!

Alas. Peace! Almagro!—Nay,

Scowl not upon my father! If you are angry,
Brow me!

Alma. My dear Alasco!

Ruph. Dear!—how long?

The Prince did never yet a double deed!
I would that I could say as much for thee!

Alma. For me! [*Furiously.*]

Alas. Again? May not an old man say
What he likes?

Ruph. I would all young men spoke as true!

Alas. Father! your child is shamed! that horrid word
Written on her brow, thou'dst wish her dead ere read there:
Her!—me!—thyselves!—all kith and kin thou hast!
And can thy breast find room for other cause
Of hate, reviling, or revenge? If it can,
Mine can't.

Alma. No more can mine. I have no foes
Save those who wrong thy sister!—none will have!
Give me thy hand, Velasquez, and be friends.

Velas. I could be friends with him bespoke me foul!
I could be friends with him that gave me blow;
But with the friend who fail'd me in the need
He should, and could have help'd; I'll ne'er be friends.

Alma. By hell! Velasquez—[*Furiously.*]

Alas. Do you rage again?
Or did I dream you do? Friends! if not friends
Among yourselves, waive jars awhile for me!
Who is a caitiff, be it not the man
Laws civil and religious cannot bind?
Or what are prayers, if holy rites are threads,
And those they bind, asunder cut, at will?
Or what is Heaven, if of no more esteem
Than what 'tis witness to, to be pronounced
A fraud and nullity? 'Tis sacrilege
If from the altar one abstract a mite,
And the offender dies; yet, by my troth,
It may be want that did the deed, not he,
And hunger breaks, they say, through walls of stone!
But what prompts *him* who mocks the altar, friends?
Pays to the compact 'tis appliance to
No grain of the respect he entertains
For bargains struck by hands 'cross market tables?
What, if not hell?—What should be done to such,
Ay, say he wore a crown?

Alma. He should be stripp'd on't,—
Caged in a mine—yea, mulcted to the cost
Of his life!

Ruph. O no—no—no! He should be made
To render back their rights to those from whom
He wrested them—no more. That's justice, sir;
The rest is vengeance, which belongs to Heaven,
Not sinful things like men!

Alas. We'll master him,
Then deal with him.

Ruph. My son, you will not then
Be masters of yourselves!

Alas. No fear of us!
Come!—To the villages! and every man
Call out his friends, and bring them where we'll meet
In one o'erwhelming mass!

Peasants. Where?

Alas. Let's consult!

[Retires a little with ALMAGRO and the rest.]

Ruph. Back—back, Velasquez, as thou lovest me!
Back to the capital! find out my child!—
Apprise her of what's coming! She may need
To be upon her guard. I'll do as much
For thee. Meanwhile, I'll get me ready, friend,
And follow thee with all the speed I can.

[VELASQUEZ goes out.]

Oh, how I shake!—Storms do not for old trees—
Time was I thought them puffs. I then was young!

Alas. and Alma. At the Cross!

[The rest echo them, exclaiming, "At the Cross!"]

Alma. Now for redress of common grievances—
Burdens should not be borne—We'll cast them off!

Peasants. We will!

Alma. One signal wrong does better than
Tocsins, my friends, to call bold men to arms!

Peasants. To arms!

Ruph. Hear me, my boy!—Alasco! O, my son!—

Alas. I am thy son, and for that very reason
I will not hear thee, while my sister suffers
An injury and a shame.—To arms! to arms!

*[All except RUPHINO rush out, crying, "To arms!
to arms!" RUPHINO totters into the Cottage.]*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*In the Citadel.*

Enter the KING and ANDREAS.

King. What! not the jewels that he gave her?

And. No;

Though o'er and o'er assured, in taking them,
She did your highness' will. Her wedding-ring
Was all she kept.

King. No murmurs? No complaints?

And. None; but, instead, prayers for your highness' health,
And length of prosperous life!

King. She would be thought
A martyr! She has heard how such have suffer'd,
Blessing their persecutors; and pretends
To imitate them! 'Tis the way to make
Misfortunes profit us—especially
With the mean—to whom the pang still brings the wail.
It moves their wonder, and they worship that
They wonder at! I warrant you she won,
With patient aspect, and undrooping mien,
More hearts to pity her, as she went forth,
Than tears and wringing of the hands had done!

And. She went not forth by the chief portal, but
A private one, and thereby shunn'd the crowd,
That fill'd the street with ferment.

King. By your care,
Or by her own?

And. Her own, my gracious liege.

King. 'Twas much forbearance; but the girl is shrewd;
She knows unlikely things may come to pass;
The hardest heart may melt; my mind may change
To bind more fast, what now I have unbound;
Whereto she takes good heed no hindrance come,
Through lack of patience, now! She is very wise!
Her beauty, past compare, must all allow.
Can she be blind to what all others see?
And can she see it, without prizing it?
The homeliest maid, I ever met with, thought
More of herself than she would seem to do.
She is very wise!—Aught said she of the Prince?

And. No, not a word; but paused before she went,
Gazing upon his portrait strainingly.
I think, but am not sure, at first she wept,
For past her eyes her kerchief once she drew;
'Twas then put up, and, to her other hand,
The hand that held it, join'd in fervent clasp;
And thus she stood, the spirit, as I thought,
Of very prayer, itself, personified;
For o'er her face the cast which masters give,
To paint the act of beatific trance,
Spread, flooding it with light! whate'er she thought,
The words were in her heart.—She breathed no sound
Till she had made an end; as I inferr'd
From a deep sigh she drew; whereon she turn'd
With aspect heavenly calm, as worshippers,
That rise refresh'd, from the renewing altar.

King. You speak this heartily!

And. I speak the truth!

King. You say the Cortez, in last night's debate,
Made question of my faculty to break
This most pernicious marriage?

And. Many spoke
To that effect,—made it a pretext for
Rehearsal of old grievances.

King. What *they*
Call grievances!—Was there much heat?

And. There was :
But that within doors, cool to that without,
Where up and down the streets the people ran,
Women and men, but women frequentest,
Crying to one another, as they pass'd,
“The Rose of Arragon!”—“Fall Arragon
Ere she be trampled on!”—“No Rose, no King!”

King. Suspect you danger?

And. Yes, when discontents
Draw women out of doors, revolt is strong.

King. The garrison is under arms?

And. It is,
And, every quarter of an hour, patrols
Are sent into the town, to go the rounds,
And keep in check disorder, by the show
Of preparation and alacrity!

King. You have not yet gone forth?

And. Not yet, my liege ;
I wait for Carlos, to report the state
And prospect of affairs. It is his hour—
And he at hand as soon.

King. Well, Carlos?

Enter CARLOS.

Car. All
Was quiet through the night ; and, as the night,
I would aver the day were like to pass,
But for unwonted calm. An hour, or more,
’Tis past the time the shopkeeper should ope—
And he is up, but bides with shutters closed ;
The craft of the artificer stands still,
And yet he is awake since break of day—
The cries are silent on the crowdless streets ;
The very churls, whose meals on errands wait,
Stand not upon the watch for customers,
And breakfast-time at hand ! ’Tis market-day—
And to the gates no troops of peasants come,
With garden-viands, flocks, or herds, or aught
Within the list of rustic merchandise.
None is at work, save the tired sentinel
Who paces, out and back, his beat ; on watch
’Gainst dangers yet unseen.

King. It cannot be !

Car. What cannot be, my liege ?

King. That they design
Revolt !

And. There’s eight o’clock.

King. Hark, sirs!—The town
Is all at once astir! What is't?—Look out!

Car. Their houses, one and all the citizens
Have left, and throng the streets;—their cloaks are on,
Close-folded on their breasts; they move one way,
As on one common object bent!

King. Descend:
Wait till your eye on some acquaintance falls,
Then call and question him. Go both of you—
[*Exeunt CARLOS and ANDREAS.*

What is't to be a king?—To govern?—Ay!
With such observance as the pilot meets,
Who thinks to rule the sea! not more perverse,
Than moody ever-changing subjects are!
Rejoicing in his helm, *he* ploughs along!
Leagues fleet like miles beneath his flying keel!
Before its time his port begins to loom!—
When takes him, right ahead, all unawares,
A furious shift of wind; which, if he 'scapes
From foundering, blows him, from his jocund course
A thousand miles away!—So with a king!
A month ago the war was popular;
My people's wishes with my army blew,
Which from the gates of Saragossa march'd
'Mid shouts that would have made their cannon mute,
Suppose 'twere set to roar.—I was a god!
Knees bent to me as I retraced my steps,
Returning to my palace! All at once
The humour changed. From end to end the realm
Became one caldron, ready to boil o'er
With discontents! A little more of heat
Was wanted only—that is now supplied!
The meanest sire in Arragon, suppose
His son, like mine, offended, would be free
To cast his bride and him to beggary!
But I must needs forbear, because—a king!—

Enter CARLOS.

Your tidings, Carlos?

Car. In our power we hold
The cause, if not the head of the revolt,
That boldly now breaks forth!—Within the gates,
Acting in concert, as 'tis shrewdly guess'd,
With the malcontents,—the Rose of Arragon,
Attended by a peasant, new alighted,
With steed, nigh spent, as through unwonted haste—
Has been surprised, made captive of, and now
Attends with those who guard her.

King. Did we straight
Decree her death, who could arraign our justice?
On pain of death, did we forbid return;
On her account defection menaces

Our throne, our life ; and she, the cause, defies
Our warning and our wrath ! To durance with her !

Olivia [*without*]. The King ! the King ! As you are loyal
men,
Bring me before him !

King. Is't to me she comes ?
Let her approach.

Olivia. I must and will pass in !

[*Rushes in and sinks exhausted before the KING,*
VELASQUEZ following.

Forgive, my liege, the limbs that can't command
The homage they have all the heart to pay ;
And helpless throw themselves along the ground,
Instead of kneeling there.

King. How happens this ?
Girl, I could rail, but thy pale cheek disarms me !
What ! art thou scared to see the conflagration
Which thou, thyself, hast raised ? Or hast return'd
To Saragossa, whence I banish'd thee,
To fan the discontent that takes thy part ;
And, now thou art detected, makest pretence
On my account thou art here ?

Olivia. I could not play,
My liege, a double part ! I know not how !
On your account alone I brave your frown ;
Which, though it held the lightning's power to blast,
Should not prevent me, for thy health and life,
To crawl to thee ! to clasp thy knees ! and, with
A heart as full of love as loyalty,
To warn thee of thy danger !

King. Loyalty !
And love !—What love ?

Olivia. O can you not conceive
Love may be cherish'd, for another's sake,
Towards those who pay us back no grain of love—
Nay, pay us hate instead ?—'Tis true, my liege !
Indeed, indeed ! 'tis true !—My heart's dear lord
You have taken from me !—'Cross the contract which
Gave him to me, drawn pen !—torn off the seal !—
Stripp'd me to the skin, as 'twere, and cast me forth !—
Yet, could my life this moment stead you,—stand
In the place of yours, and yours were forfeited,
Assuring yours to you—so tender is
The love I bear you, for my dear lord's sake,—
I would not look at it, ere I would lay it down !

King. What wouldst thou gain by such a sacrifice ?

Olivia. Content of mine own heart !—and having that,
I would bless Heaven and die.

King. This is romance,
Whose forms are of the brain !—but, look for them
In act, you find them not ; no more than shadows
Which mock the hand, would grasp them.

Olivia. Take a proof!

King. Ay, canst thou give me one?

Olivia. I come not back

Rebelliously to Saragossa, whence

I went with but obedience in my heart.

If you except my love for my dear lord—

I had no thought, save of the arms I had left;

And those, my father's, I was going to.

King. What made thee then return?

Olivia. My fears for thee!

Roused by the danger thou'rt environ'd with.

King. How couldst thou see the thing that was behind thee;
That had not broken forth, till thou wast gone?

Olivia. I speak, my liege, of fears that were before me,
With word of which, this friend prevented me,
Instructed by my father!—Arragon,

As well as Saragossa, is in arms;

Taking advantage of the distant war

Which leaves your kingdom weak.—Not your throne only,
Your life is threaten'd; so, did I return

Against thy will, to warn thee for thy safety,

To urge thee to consult it; which to do,

Flight must embrace this moment!—wouldst thou fly,

To fly along with thee—thy hostage only!—

And wouldst thou not, to die along with thee!

King. What proof have I of this?

Olivia. That I am here!

What! dear my liege, won't you believe me still?

A simple villager had ta'en my word!

Who would be great, when greatness breeds mistrust!

My liege!—My liege!—I am no courtier's child;

My father ne'er had need to hide his heart,

So ne'er had thought to teach me to hide mine;

And though I have heard men speak and think diverse,

The act I never yet could comprehend;

But, when their lips were open'd, listen'd still,

To hear their hearts!—What cause should bring me back

Except your health?—your safety?—Oh, my liege!

Is it the roof whence, banishing my lord,

You banish'd me enough? is it the bed

Whence you divorced me, not content with that?

Is it the face which, when I saw it last,

Transfix'd me with a look that wish'd me dead,

And almost struck me so?—What were the words

Of him who spoke your will to me?—“*On pain*

“*Of death never to see this palace more!*”

I see it!—I incur the penalty!

My life is forfeit!—Take it!—Save thy own!

The only end that brought me back again!

King. I must believe her;—yet can I believe

Deeds worthy richest blood, can live without?—

Incredible!—Yet true!—Well, Carlos,—well?—

Enter CARLOS.

Hast met with those, can tell thee what's afoot?

Car. No, my good liege, save by surmises.

King. Well;

And what surmise your friends?

Car. Some outbreak of
The citizens! But we can master them.

King. Yes, we can master Saragossa!—but
There is fear of Arragon.

Enter GOMEZ.

Gomez. The citizens
And troops contend to hold the city gates,
Which now the peasantry beset in throngs,
As on some festal day, but not with looks
Pertaining to a feast.

Olivia. Sirs! if you are men,
Persuade the King to fly—not Saragossa,
But Arragon, on treason is intent!
And, thereunto, moves hither all its power,
With threats pernicious to the life of the King.

Velas. Fly! fly, my liege!

Gomez. The subterranean vault
That, from the castle, leads without the walls,
Wide from the quarter whence this tempest breaks—
That gain'd, you are safe!

And. The soldiery give way! *[From window.]*

King. I will not fly!—Girl, you have told me truth!
Consult your safety,—join your friends,—leave me!

Olivia. I will not quit your side,—I have a brother,
Will hear his sister's voice; friends, that will hear it.
Whate'er betide, my life I link with yours!
Both shall survive, or both one ruin share!

King. Girl, are you flesh and blood?

Olivia. No, but a rock!
Stand back! *[Meeting ALMAGRO, and others entering.]*

Alma. The King himself!—This crowns our work,
Our expedition in his death complete.—
Upon him!

Olivia. Hold! he is my prisoner!
And I have guaranteed his life!—Take mine
If you choose, Almagro.—If you don't, spare his,
Or you *shall* take my life.—Well were it said
The Rose of Arragon kept not her word;
When every Spanish woman, who deserves
To bear her father's name, respects her pledge!
These are *my* friends, Almagro, more than yours!
They are my brother's friends yet more than mine!
They have mothers, sisters, loves, or wives, Almagro!
They will respect my bidding for *their* sakes.

Alma. For your sake come I hither.

Olivia. And I thank you.
 And, for the good you mean me, will not shame you;
 Nor, countrymen and friends, will I shame you,
 And leave it to your enemies to say,
 While you stood by, I broke a *Spaniard's* word!
Alma. Suffer ye, friends, a woman thus to thwart you?
Olivia. Almagro, who is with you?—who is leader?
Alma. Your brother.
Olivia. Wait his orders, then!
Alma. I do them!
Olivia. No, on my honour!—by his father's honour!—
 His own! He seeks but justice from the King,
 No drop of the King's blood! He loves his sister,
 But yet he is the subject of the King!
 He is a patriot—no regicide!
Alma. Friends, do you halt half-way? Why come ye hither?
 Why are your swords in your hands? You are standing here?—
 There stands the King, and lives!
Cortez and Nunez. He should not live!
Alma. Who seconds me? [*Going to advance.*]
 [OLIVIA throws herself upon the KING.
Olivia. Come on, then, if you will;
 My word, you hear, is pledged to save the King!
 Either respect my pledge, or see me die!
 Around the King's life thus do I wind my own;
 If not a safeguard, then a sacrifice!
Alas. [*without*]. *Olivia!*
Olivia. Here, *Alasco!*—Speed, my brother!
 Here—Here!—He comes! Now to touch the King who
 dares?

ALASCO rushes in, followed by others.

Alas. My sister!
Olivia. Ay, my brother!
Alas. How! the King! [*Uncovering.*
King. Your sovereign, sir!—Are you a subject, or
 A traitor? If a traitor, in his blood
 Consummate what you have begun,—whereto
 He lends you his own sword!
 [*Throws down his sword, scornfully.*
 Sirs, sheathe your blades! With loyal hearts like yours
 The King commands, as long as the King lives!
 In strife like this—not strife but butchery—
 You shall not stain your blades!
Alas. My liege, except
 What's shed without, no blood shall flow to-day.
 Sheathe your swords, comrades, *Saragossa's* won!
 To custody the King will condescend
 To render up his person. You, *Velasquez,*
 Will in safe wardship see the King bestow'd.
 Your heads uncover'd, sirs!—'tis Majesty,

Though it be fallen in fortunes—

[*The KING and others retire, guarded by VELASQUEZ and Peasants—all uncover as he goes off.*

Come, Olivia,

Sister, you are no offcast now:—Sit there:

[*Takes her to the throne, and places her upon it.*

You are the Prince's wife. Till he comes back
And owns her such, the King allowing it,
And to our grievances giving full redress,
Who should be Regent, brothers?—who if not
The Rose of Arragon!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Saragossa.*

Enter RUPHINO and VELASQUEZ.

Ruph. The people meet to-day! Who summon'd them?

Velas. That have I yet to learn. No proclamation,
Notice, affix'd on the accustom'd quarters,
Calls them together; yet from mouth to mouth
The rumour runs, they meet.

Ruph. No whisper who
Convokes them?

Velas. Some say one, and some another;
But still, with one and all, alike conjecture.

Ruph. Knows this Alasco?

Velas. Him I have not seen.

Ruph. Alasco loses ground. He is nobody!
Cortez and Nunez, who were yesterday
Alasco's hinds, to-day are better men,
Rated as the things for which they pass themselves.
We can tell gold, not men! The coin that's spurious
Won't pass with one in twenty!—out of twenty
Take one, you scarcely the proportion leave,
Who, for the sterling man, will take the base!
Opinion lords it! Let but the cheat keep close,
Take heed the wash conceals the brass or lead,
The stamp and colour carry it!—We ring gold;
We do not so with men, but trust report,
Or sight; and hence the coiner swamps the mint!
So where base metal stops, the counterfeit
Of human nature passes!

Velas. Bitter truths!

There is Almagro! nothing is too high
For his o'er-reaching insolence, which his craft
Passes for the aspiring of desert!
Whereto he gathers those around him, whom

And. None; but, instead, prayers for your highness' health,
And length of prosperous life!

King. She would be thought
A martyr! She has heard how such have suffer'd,
Blessing their persecutors; and pretends
To imitate them! 'Tis the way to make
Misfortunes profit us—especially
With the mean—to whom the pang still brings the wail.
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They wonder at! I warrant you she won,
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Whereto she takes good heed no hindrance come,
Through lack of patience, now! She is very wise!
Her beauty, past compare, must all allow.
Can she be blind to what all others see?
And can she see it, without prizing it?
The homeliest maid, I ever met with, thought
More of herself than she would seem to do.
She is very wise!—Aught said she of the Prince?

And. No, not a word; but paused before she went,
Gazing upon his portrait strainingly.
I think, but am not sure, at first she wept,
For past her eyes her kerchief once she drew;
'Twas then put up, and, to her other hand,
The hand that held it, join'd in fervent clasp;
And thus she stood, the spirit, as I thought,
Of very prayer, itself, personified;
For o'er her face the cast which masters give,
To paint the act of beatific trance,
Spread, flooding it with light! whate'er she thought,
The words were in her heart.—She breathed no sound
Till she had made an end; as I inferr'd
From a deep sigh she drew; whereon she turn'd
With aspect heavenly calm, as worshippers,
That rise refresh'd, from the renewing altar.

King. You speak this heartily!

And. I speak the truth!

King. You say the Cortez, in last night's debate,
Made question of my faculty to break
This most pernicious marriage?

And. Many spoke
To that effect,—made it a pretext for
Rehearsal of old grievances.

King. What *they*
Call grievances!—Was there much heat?

And. There was :
But that within doors, cool to that without,
Where up and down the streets the people ran,
Women and men, but women frequentest,
Crying to one another, as they pass'd,
“The Rose of Arragon!”—“Fall Arragon
Ere she be trampled on!”—“No Rose, no King!”

King. Suspect you danger?

And. Yes, when discontents
Draw women out of doors, revolt is strong.

King. The garrison is under arms?

And. It is,
And, every quarter of an hour, patrols
Are sent into the town, to go the rounds,
And keep in check disorder, by the show
Of preparation and alacrity!

King. You have not yet gone forth?

And. Not yet, my liege ;
I wait for Carlos, to report the state
And prospect of affairs. It is his hour—
And he at hand as soon.

King. Well, Carlos?

Enter CARLOS.

Car. All
Was quiet through the night ; and, as the night,
I would aver the day were like to pass,
But for unwonted calm. An hour, or more,
'Tis past the time the shopkeeper should open—
And he is up, but bides with shutters closed ;
The craft of the artificer stands still,
And yet he is awake since break of day—
The cries are silent on the crowdless streets ;
The very churls, whose meals on errands wait,
Stand not upon the watch for customers,
And breakfast-time at hand ! 'Tis market-day---
And to the gates no troops of peasants come,
With garden-viands, flocks, or herds, or aught
Within the list of rustic merchandise.
None is at work, save the tired sentinel
Who paces, out and back, his beat ; on watch
'Gainst dangers yet unseen.

King. It cannot be !

Car. What cannot be, my liege ?

King. That they design
Revolt !

And. There's eight o'clock.

Display and luxury corrupt—who leave
 His board high flush'd, to publish, in his praise,
 The flatteries he himself suggests to them.
 This will not yet thy son, Alasco, see,
 Who, in his singleness of nature, hugs
 A foe, the very worst the man can cope with
 Who deals with such a partner as Almagro!
 Take you Alasco, any day in the year,
 He is the same!—no change of bearing waits
 On change of circumstance—his station mounts,
 Not he!—His peasant's dress he still keeps on,
 Though arbiter of the fate of Arragon!
 This balks; and all at fault we find the crowd,
 Who still the flimsy shows of things affect
 More than the things themselves; while, by a course
 Diverse, Almagro gathers hosts of friends!
 Behoves that man be watch'd!

Ruph. Here comes Almagro,
 Cortez and Nunez too!—My heart forebodes
 Some mischief is afoot! You will attend
 This meeting, will you not?

Velas. Be sure I shall.
 The hour draws nigh.

Ruph. I shall attend it too,
 Though somewhat frail to thread the jostling mass.
 Observe, my friend—so deep are they in converse,
 They note us not! They are plotting, my Velasquez!
[*They go out.*]

Enter ALMAGRO, CORTEZ, and NUNEZ.

Alma. The man who takes the lead in troublous times,
 Would need a certain toughness of the heart,
 To withstand the dint of Pity,—not give way
 At her instances, which ever thwart the course
 Of just severity. Now such a man,
 Methinks, Alasco is not;—a good man!
 A perfect man in the gentler elements
 Wherein our nature's founded; but without
 Those sterner ones, which render action safe,
 To those therein committed.

Cortez. You are right;
 He is too good!

Alma. A man may be too good!
 'Twas fit the King should die! Strong measures suit
 Bold enterprises!—steps that startle men!—
 Deeds that commit the actors thoroughly!—
 Which defy halting; far more, turning back;
 That fear itself takes risk for counsellor,
 And, in the track of doing, bustles on!
 For though one end combineth many minds,
 Yet, of those many, few—perhaps but one—
 Can calculate the means unto that end—

The road to it, which ever is to make;
 Which some like straight, and others roundabout;
 Which some would travel wet, and others dry;
 Which some would take by day, and some by night;
 Which some would trudge, and others roll along!
 Thus, if all go together, one must lead;
 That all go safe, he must know how to lead;
 He must be brains, and heart, and limbs for all!
 I fear Alasco scarce is such a man.

Nunez. 'Tis clear he is not.

Cortez. See what he has done!
 Spared the King's life, wherein our grievance lay!

Alma. Wherein our peril lies, not only that
 Our grievance may return with fourfold weight,
 But heavy penalty be undergone
 For the free breath that we have dared to draw!

Cortez. Talk you of penalty?

Alma. Of penalty!
 For see our plight:—the power we have unseated
 Is old in stratagem—has stuck at nought
 To keep the upper hand:—is perfected
 In subtlety to undermine the heart,
 And make the conscience crumble till its scruples
 Are swallow'd quick as water is by sand!
 The King's a prisoner!—what then? A cage
 Lets out as well as in!—no fool but knows
 There are more keys than one to every door,
 And, failing keys, picklocks and sledges work!
 And what are guards, but watchers that must be watch'd!
 While those who watch them may be bad as they,
 And need *their* watchers too!—Nought that partakes
 Of flesh and blood is all dependable!
 "Last life, live hope."—Ay, while there runs a spark
 Among the embers!—There's no bondage, then,
 That's end of hope, but death, with which life ends!
 While the King lives, there's hope for tyranny,
 And peradventure, there's despair for us!

Nunez. If he escapes, we are lost.

Alma. Not all of us.
 Alasco is not lost, who spared the King!
 Were I a man who saw with other eyes
 Than those of partial love, thus might I say—
 "Well done, Alasco!—how the fair world goes!
 "Honesty has no chance in it!—makes a noose
 "For its own neck, e'en of the selfsame springe
 "That knavery poaches with!"—I'd slay the man
 That call'd Alasco knave!—yet thus a man
 Who loved him not might say—"A day ago
 "Alasco was a traitor like myself,
 "Like you, and every one of us!—his neck
 "Was debtor to the noose!—but mark,—the death
 "Of the King, which he along with us conspired,

"And which proposing only, we have pawn'd
 "Our lives and all to fortune, by a cast
 "To be redeem'd or lost; he makes assurance
 "Of safety, enrich'd by such prosperity,
 "As of his tallest hopes, a month ago
 "Makes pigmies now!—saves the King's life!—Good sooth,
 "Some men see far,—can calculate most shrewdly
 "The course of consequences!—I had studied
 "An hour, or more, methinks, ere I had seen
 "The way to the King's favour was to put
 "His life in jeopardy."—You know I speak
 Not as myself, but as another man!
 I love Alasco, and, with care for him,
 I contemplate his acts with others' eyes—
 Or rather strive to do so—much I fear,
 In their regards, his mercy to the King
 Seems favour to himself.

Nunez. And yet he keeps
 The King in durance!

Alma. True.

Nunez. How thereupon
 Shall he acquit himself to the King?

Alma. How?

Nunez. Yes.

Alma. By laying it to our charge; to which, no doubt,
 He to the King sets down his threaten'd life!—
 Heard'st what one said to me, when that I urged
 Which you urge now—a shrewd, far-sighted man?

Cortez. What did he say?

Alma. "Alasco spares the King,
 "Thereby incensing us, too chafed thereat
 "To brook the further step—setting the King
 "At liberty!"—Do you see?—"On our account
 "He keeps the King in durance—for himself,
 "He would set him free to-morrow!"—Do you see?
 "He makes his sister Regent,—What is she?
 "The wife of the Prince, the King's son!—Very well!
 "Where is the Prince?—on the frontier with the army.
 "Where will he be a month hence, when he learns
 "The state of Saragossa?—At her gates,
 "With other knocks than beggars give for alms
 "Besieging them; which we would treat like beggars!—
 "But worse than thousand foes without the camp,
 "Is one that lurks within it!—He gains entrance!—
 "He sets his father on the throne again,
 "His wife ascended but to render up;—
 "Alasco is the brother of his wife;
 "Alasco, the preserver of the King;
 "Alasco of his treason is assoil'd;
 "His fault transmuted into his desert;
 "His sister, royal consort for his sake;
 "Himself adopted, cherish'd, help'd to climb;

"While we, his instruments, which when he used
 "He cast aside, obtain for our deserts
 "The dungeon, or the galleys, or the scaffold."
 Now do you see?

Cortez. How well you argue it!

Alma. I, my dear friend!—I only tell you what
 Another said—I did not argue so.
 How could I, loving good Alasco?—Love
 With all mankind is blindness, more or less!

Cortez. Would we had made you Regent!—

Alma. Had you done so,
 Thus far at least you had been safe—your ends
 Had been my own!

Nunez. And why not Regent now?

Cortez. The law is now the people's will—the people
 To-day assemble—Nunez, you and I
 Repair to the place of meeting, and at once
 Propose Almagro Regent!

Alma. [*Affecting surprise.*] Do the people
 Assemble to-day?

Cortez. They do.

Alma. You much surprise me!
 And wherefore, friends?

Nunez. Sure you forget, to ask!

Alma. Do I?—I must, when you assert I do!

Nunez. Recall, good sir, what yesternight you said—
 "Behoved the people meet more frequently;
 "As none could tell the day, or hour, their voices
 "Might save the liberties of Arragon."

Alma. Something to that effect I now recall.

Cortez. To that effect we lost no time, but set
 Your friends at once to work; who so contrived,
 The people act as of their own accord,
 Nor know the springs that move them.

Alma. Admirable!

A master-stroke, indeed, of policy!

Cortez. Come, Nunez, come! Almagro shall be Regent!
 [*Exeunt CORTEZ and NUNEZ.*]

Alma. Gods, what a giant is the mass, in act!
 In reason, what a child!—I shall be Regent!
 They think Alasco traitor! Honesty,
 Thou know'st thy thanks! Sweat on!—Alasco is honest;
 Means all men fairly, as he means himself;
 Is true to the cause; would fetter his own limbs,
 To give immunity to the meanest man's
 That has embraced it;—yet is he a traitor!
 Why so should all men fare who think they live
 But for the world, and not the world for them.
 I am Alasco's friend!—Yes, on the terms
 I have been a friend to many another man,
 To friend myself!—Apart from that, Alasco
 Is such a man as jars my nature most—

A trusting lover of the common race ;
 Looks to another's good before his own ;
 Never suspects that men may cheat, betray ;
 Much less that they might swear themselves his friends,
 And cut his throat, as I, almost could do,
 But for this cause, had I no other reason,
 That people say, and not his friends alone,
 I have fatten'd on his credit !—for the tax
 My pride has paid him there—he shall pay galling !
 Yet will I keep awhile the mask on, for
 The passion that consumes me, drinks my blood up,
 And prompts defiance both of earth and heaven
 To compass the possession of his sister !
 He is at hand !—now to receive my friend—
 Welcome, Alasco !

ALASCO enters.

Alas. Welcome every hour
 That brings me to my friend !

Alma. [*with over-acted energy*]. I am thy friend.

Alas. It were believed without that emphasis !
 Is anything wrong ? Require I now a friend
 More than at any other time ?

Alma. O no !

Alas. Almagro, more is written on thy brow
 Than thou think'st meet to trust thy tongue withal !
 That smile's too thin ! I can see through it, man !
 It comes from the head, and not the heart ; the which
 'Tis meant to hide, not show !

Alma. Doubt'st thou my truth ?

Alas. Ay—thou'rt in earnest now ! In honest earnest !
 Thou think'st, indeed, I do !—My own Almagro,
 I am too clear myself, to doubt thy truth,
 Or any other man's, unless, indeed,
 Upon most cogent reason. Listen to me !
 There are not wanting those who love me well,
 Whom I love well, that have essay'd to shake
 My faith in thee. When saw'st thou it was shaken ?
 Have I not still return'd to thee, my friend,
 With open face and heart ? Thou hast borne me hard—
 Too hard, in sooth, to justify endurance
 In any but a brother—till I have felt
 My tingling fingers coiling in my palm !—
 O had I struck thee then !—but, at the thought
 Of blow to thee, I could have struck myself ;
 And never parted we at such a time,
 But I have held to thee my open palm
 As frank as now I do !

Alma. [*with an effort*]. As frank I take it.

Alas. What is the matter, man ? I do not feel
 The pressure of your hand as I was wont :
 Ay, there it is ! but comes upon the hint.

It used to come without! Man! you are thinking
Of something else than me! or else of me,
In other mood than you were wont to think.
Have I done anything?

Alma. No.

Alas. No? that's right.
What is it, then?

Alma. What?

Alas. What—Come! Come! You know
There's something. What is it?

Alma. There is no satisfying
The people!

Alas. Now 'tis coming! Well?—go on!

Alma. They are jealous of you.

Alas. Jealous, are they?—why?

Alma. Because you spared the King.

Alas. I never thought
To harm the King.

Alma. No?

Alas. No!

Alma. I thought you did!

Alas. You thought I did?—what! take his life, and he
In our power?—Lose my own first!—While he was free,
While he was able to dispute with us,
His power to oppress, and ours to right ourselves;
The argument, indeed, was life or death!
That's over!—at an end!—Take the King's life?
I'd slay the man that talk'd of touching it!

Alma. What did you then propose?

Alas. What I set out with!

Assurance of my sister's nuptial rights,
And full redress of the people's grievances.

Alma. Which you will get! [*Ironically.*]

Alas. Will get?—Be sure, I will!

Alma. Our friends believe they had been perfected
In the King's death.

Alas. Our friends believe like fools!

I'll not say, knaves.—Is not the King our hostage?

Where lies his value? Is it in his life,

Or in his body, only?—While his friends

Believe they risk his life, to strike at ours,

Will they be quick to come to blows!—or rather

Will they not seek a parley?—treat with us?—

Listen to our terms?—award them their due weight?

Grant them?—upon the Gospels ratify

A treaty with us, sworn to by the King himself?

Take the King's life!

Alma. Would I had thought of this
An hour ago!

Alas. Why?

Alma. I had been prepared
To justify you to the people.

Alas. Pshaw!
I'll justify myself.

Alma. I know him not,
He is positive when into action prick'd.
I have err'd in rating him too much a child,
And over-reach'd myself—I must recover,
With the hold I have upon his love for me.
Alasco!

Alas. Well!

Alma. Methinks was never pair
So link'd in love as we are! We should have been
Brothers!

Alas. And we are so!—are we not?
The worth of birth is but the right to love.
We love as well as brothers, do we not,
Without that right?—what are we then, but brothers?
Come you to flesh and blood?—as all mankind
Had but one parentage, in the great first,
All flesh and blood are one!

Alma. Yet there's a nearness
In affinity.

Alas. Marry, yes,—for cuffs as well
As huggings!—Brothers have been haters!—From
One womb spring many natures, as diverse
As the winds, the children of the common air!

Alma. *Alasco*, once you wish'd I were your brother,
By such a tie, as would have yet enrich'd
Our ample stock of love.

Alas. I did.

Alma. The Prince,
Thwarting my hopes, scarce ran, methinks, with thine,
Or I deceive myself.

Alas. You are not deceived,
And know it—Wherefore make a doubt of it?

Alma. Our surest wishes sometimes make them doubts,
Through wantonness to reassure themselves!
I should have been the husband of Olivia!

Alas. You should!—you had been, had my will been done.

Alma. I know your power was beggar to your will,
Whose vast abundance mock'd its penury!
Now haply turn'd to riches!—Friendship is
A godlike thing!

Alas. 'Tis perfect in itself!
So has the start of love, that's not content
Without its guerdon rich; to purchase which,
Crowns have been lost, and what surpasses them,
The grace of which they are but symbolical!
Whence blossoms richer than the garden's prime,
Supposing e'en the Hesperian fable truth,
Have broke their golden promise, and for fruit,
Given all their glorious hues to nourish poison!
But friendship, save its mood, seeks no delight:

Therein it all rejoices!—temperate—
 Without the fiery throbbings of the brain,
 And beatings of the heart!—unjealous!—pleased
 To gather hearts for those it cherishes,
 And of its own, making a goodly field,
 Where nothing springs, but healthy generous seed,
 Fair thoughts, pure feelings, sentiments sublime,
 To justify and grace its loved election!

Alma. Friends have done miracles for those they loved.

Alas. They have!—I wonder, my Almagro, what
 I would not do for thee?

Alma. There was a thing
 You might have done, and did not.

Alas. What was it?

Alma. You knew I loved!

Alas. I did, and help'd your love,
 Far as I could.

Alma. Not so, Alasco!

Alas. No?

Alma. You urged my suit, indeed, but not methinks
 With all that sturdy earnestness you owed me;
 Gavest way, to soon, to a girl's fantasy,
 And an old man's inclining!

Alas. Did I?

Alma. Yes.

Alas. I am sorry you should think so!

Alma. I am sorry
 I should have cause to think so.—Look, Alasco:
 Had I a sister, by a friend beloved,
 Her wishes should incline the way I chose,
 Howe'er they strain'd diversely!

Alas. Ay!—indeed?
 I think you are wrong!—A woman in affection
 Is steadfastness, or steadfastness is nothing.
 And they are fools who seek it.

Alma. They are fools
 Who in the heart of very weakness, think
 To find so stern a thing.

Alas. Almagro!

Alma. Nay,
 I know I speak harsh truths to you; and yet,
 Did I speak harsher, I'm your fastest friend!
 Where was your sister's love for you, Alasco,
 When she repell'd the suit you urged for me?
 Sisters love brothers, don't they?

Alas. Yes.

Alma. Methinks
 Behoves such love be steadfast.

Alas. Certainly.

Alma. You pleaded for your friend with all your heart.

Alas. With all my heart and soul, Almagro.

Alma. Nay,

I'm sure you did—I am content you did—
But had been more so, with the proof of it

Alas. What proof would you have?

Alma. What proof would I have?—Success!
The only solid proof of earnestness!

Alas. Almagro!—

Alma. Yes, I know—your sister's heart
Was given to the Prince—That's past and gone, *Alasco!*
The heyday of their love is over, now!
From her deserted bed she now looks back
Upon the day he knelt to woo her thither,
Who leaves her now alone there!

Alas. Well, Almagro?

Alma. Thy sister is divorced.

Alas. They say she is.

Alma. What hinders her to be Almagro's wife?

Alas. Heav'n!—her own heart!—her father's honour!—
mine!—

Don't touch me there, Almagro!

Alma. Touch thee there!

Who touch'd thee there?—If she's divorced, she's free.

Alas. If she's divorced against her husband's will,
If she's divorced without her own default,
If she's divorced and yet the contract good—
Perfect, without a flaw, that made her a wife;
She is not free, Almagro!—She should die
Before she married thee!—What would you call
My sister?—What was she?—The paramour
Of the Prince?—What! mean you she was that, the which
Did any call her, he would put his tongue
In jeopardy; for by this honest hand
I would tear it from his throat!—Have a care, Almagro!
Men tell me thou art selfish!—and thou camest
Too near a proof just now, in thine own aims,
To overlook the honour of thy friend!
Almagro, I'm a child, but yet a man!
Let me not find thee, what men say thou art—
Assured of that I would hate thee—I, Almagro!—
That never look'd upon my fellow-flesh
Without a kindness and a care for it!

Alma. I know it is thy nature.

[*Changing his tone.*]

Alas. I have bragg'd;

But if I have, I have said the simple truth,
And, after all, where is the boast?—At best,
We are but what Heav'n made us! By no thought
Or labour of my own, I love my race,
Confide in them, and would do good to them!
It is the bias of my nature—which
Slept in my cradle, in the schoolroom waked,
And, all throughout my manhood, has held sway—
To joy in others' thriving!—When deserved—
Mark that!—I would not have pretension thrive

When not borne out by merit—'Tis as bad
 As that a lie should prosper!—Barring that,
 I fare the best when I see others banquet;
 Nor care to scramble for the upper seats
 At fortune's table—I have given them up,
 More oft, than I have ta'en them;—nor can I bear,
 Except in the sheer lack of worthiness,
 To turn my back on men who have their faults,
 Because, who has them not?—I am sure not I!—
 One kind of man alone I cannot brook—
 The man whose God is self!—But one such man,
 I bless Heaven fervently, I have ever known!
 And as fervently I pray to it,
 I ne'er may know another!—Let this pass—
 You say the people are displeased with me
 Touching the King. Is that all?

Alma. Something more—
 Affecting your fair sister.

Alas. What can it be?
 Think you I err'd to make my sister Regent?

Alma. Some soreness thereupon.

Alas. I thought it right;
 But if our friends think otherwise, 'tis well!
 I care not who is Regent, so the course
 Of things holds on.

Alma. I am glad you are of that mind.
 They meditate a change.

Alas. A change?—indeed!

Alma. And steps are taken to assemble them,
 And learn their will and pleasure.

Alas. Steps are taken?
 Why was not I consulted?

Alma. You are too easy,
 Too lax in the exacting of your rights!
 Men take advantage of you!—to say truth,
 I ne'er divined you cared to be consulted,
 Else had I put a clog upon their speed,
 Had check'd its downhill swiftiness.

Alas. I'm not pleased—
 And yet the people could not mean me wrong.
 Come, come, all's well!

Enter VELASQUEZ, CORTEZ, and NUNEZ, with People.

Velas. Well met, Alasco!

Cortez. And—

Well met, Almagro.—We have an errand, sirs,
 To both of you. The people are divided—
 Half wish Almagro Regent, half Alasco;
 All holding the same mind in this regard,
 That, in the strait we stand in, it is fit
 That one of you should hold the rule, and not

Alasco's sister. Which of you will give
His vote to place the other in her seat?

Velas. What do you say, Almagro?

Alma. Good Velasquez,
I am taken by surprise.

Alas. And so am I;

But I can speak at once—Almagro Regent!

All. Almagro Regent!

RUPHINO rushes in.

Ruph. No, no, no!—Alasco,
What have you done? I follow'd hither, fast
As my old limbs could bear me—but too late!
O son!—son—son! thy father's voice ascends
Against thy mad devotion to that man!
Whom now thy breath hath seated in command,
But to unseat, ere long, will call for blood!
O that in even balance should be held
The claims of virtue and depravity;
Of truth and falsehood; generosity;
And overweening heartless selfishness;
That the weak, good, in its simplicity,
Should cast its weight into the other scale,
And heave its own to the beam!—Friends—countrymen—
Undo what you have done!

Alas. It is too late.

Ruph. Still faithful 'gainst thyself!

Alma. Ruphino!—Sir!—

As to your years, with which your worth has grown,
Behoves me pay all reverence—observe
The first use which I make of that same power
Which you begrudge me hold. If mine, at home,
Supreme command; Alasco, rule abroad;
And, next to thee, Velasquez; whom, the more
He is bent to be my foe, the more will I
E'en as a friend entreat.

Nunez. 'Tis nobly said!

Alma. Away, Alasco! join the patriot host,
And take Velasquez with thee;—thou, the chief;
He, second in command.—My friend, embrace.
How say you, sir? Am I a man for thee
Or him to fear?—Health and success, my friend!
You, to bright gains; honours, and spoils of war!
I, to the care and drudgery of the state!

[Goes out, followed by the people, shouting.]

Ruph. This day, my son, we both shall recollect.

Velas. Alasco, come.

Ruph. Till evening wait, Velasquez.
Methinks you have forgot your sister, boy:
If not to take farewell, a word or two
Behoves you change with her before you go.
His sister would have speech with him, Velasquez!

Alas. Husband your speed, Velasquez, till I join you.

Velas. Nay, we shall start together; say an hour
Ere sunset. At the postern with your steed
An hour ere sunset shall you find me waiting.
Not till you join me shall I sally forth,
But wait for you at the postern with your steed.

[VELASQUEZ goes out.]

Ruph. What ponder you, Alasco?

Alas. Nothing.

Ruph. Son!

You are not ill?

Alas. No, no! Lead to my sister.

[They go out.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Corridor of the Dungeons.*

Enter ALMAGRO and PEDRO.

Alma. So this is thy domain?—a gloomy one!
When, yesterday, I ranged the prison-cells,
I little dream'd to find their custody
Committed to an old acquaintance. As
I told thee then, that old acquaintance may
Become my friend; and, if my friend, a rich,
Promoted one! Thou saw'st me, yesterday,
The same Almagro whom thou knew'st before,
Except the lead I took in this revolt,
And that, but second to Alasco. Now
Alasco gives me place; this hour, good Pedro,
Has placed me in the seat his sister fill'd!
Almagro rules in Saragossa now,
Almagro now is Regent. When we discoursed—
Anticipating this advancement, and
Aware that, from thy calling, thou couldst find me
Men of the mettle I might stand in need of—

Pedro. I recollect. The first is found—a Moor,
One that will do the work, whereto you set him,
Nor scan its quality.

Alma. The man I need!

Pedro. One who will serve you as he were your hand
That does your will, nor questions you thereon;
A stranger too, unknown in Saragossa!
Of bearing also, such as will not shame you.

Alma. The very man! When shall I see him?

Pedro. Now.

Alma. Bring him! [PEDRO goes out.] The man I need.
E'en upon thee

I may not count, for thou hast friends; he, none.

A tool, with friends, has but so many minds,
 May sway his own, and baffle his, he serves.
 I have won the game; but still, the stake's to get—
 To get, if needs, by force! I may not look
 To any that I know, for advance there;
 The stanchest there, might stop! I know not one
 I dare so much as e'en advise with there.
 Those who are heedless how Alasco fares,
 Would more than mutter, dared I breathe the thought
 Of trespass 'gainst the Rose of Arragon.

Enter PEDRO and OMER.

Alma. Is this the man?—his air is very stately!

Pedro. It is the carriage of his blood, my lord;
 Ne'er lack'd by its partaker.

Alma. It is well!

The reverend man I spoke of—have you found him?

Pedro. I have.

Alma. What says he?

Pedro. He too will be your hand.

Not more will question, 'less will do, your bidding.

Alma. Warn him to come to me ere nine this evening,
 Ere the third quarter turns.—Friend, do you heed
 A woman's tears? [To OMER.

Omer. They do not pierce the ear.
 Her shrieks do, and as little they would move me.

Alma. What would you stop at, to obey the will
 Of him you served?

Omer. At nothing till 'twas done!

Alma. Not blood?

Omer. No more, sir, than the blade which sheds it.

Alma. Wait by my side.—Advancement ne'er is bought,
 But at some cost of friends. I know not, now,
 Who loves me. Pry about you.—As we go
 I'll tell you where my heart and soul have cast
 Their all of being on!

Omer. An enemy,
 Whom you would overcome? He is at your feet!

Alma. An enemy whom giv'st thou to mine arms,
 I'll fall at yours, as my good angel ever!

Omer. A woman!—Can't you strain her to your mood
 Without my help?—You Christians there are wrong,
 What we as minions treat, to rate as idols!
 You flatter—sue—implore!—Possession speaks
 Our wishes!

Alma. Well you please me, thus to talk.
 Thanks, Pedro!—Come!—keep near me. Well you please me.
[They go out.

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Citadel.**Enter ALASCO and OLIVIA.**Alas.* Olivia!*Olivia.* Well, my brother?*Alas.* It is long

Since you and I have talk'd.

Olivia. There was a timeWe had not been so long apart, Alasco,
At liberty to meet!*Alas.* There was a time

We had one heart!—That time is past!

Olivia. How long?*Alas.* E'er since the hour you spurn'd your brother's friend,
His soul's election, from among the prime
Acknowledged of his race, and gave your heart
To throne a stranger.*Olivia.* He deserved it, brother!*Alas.* No, not thy heart!—The throne that he was born to,
I grant him worthy of, but not thy heart!
There is but one such throne; as for the other,
There are a hundred such—ay, maybe, better!
How much, Olivia, did it weigh with you
That he, you chose, was heir unto a throne?*Olivia.* Brother!—[*Much hurt.*]*Alas.* I know! forgive me! Not a doit!
Oh! my Olivia! lives the man durst slight thee,
And do I so? That inadvertent wrong
Hath, more than argument, set all to rights!
Being here to blame, I have been all to blame!
Forgive me! Love me! Take me to your heart
Again, as I do thee to mine, my sister!*Olivia.* How like a new gift is old love restored!
How seems it richer, though the very same!
How the soul opens to receive it, wider
Than e'er it did before!—Alasco! now
I'll show thee, brother, I have all along
Deserved thy love, deserving it e'en there
Where thou account'st me wanting!*Alas.* Not a wordOf that again! you prized the Prince's worth,
Before you knew his title; which he doff'd,
Lest, seeking love, he might ambition meet,
And take it for its betters! You were wed
Before you knew you were a prince's wife!
Have you forgiven me?*Olivia.* Have I not, my brother?But, for mine own content, Alasco, hear me,
While for thy sister's coldness to thy friend
I give thee now her reason.

Alas. Give it me,
But for thine own content; not mine, Olivia:—
Go on! Why do you hesitate? The thing
You wish'd to tell me, and I would not hear,
And then wish'd more to tell me; now I would hear it,
Why do you hesitate to tell?

Olivia. Alaseo,
You are so rash when you are angry.

Alas. [*Roused.*] Ay—
Is there chance of that?

Olivia. No, no!

Alas. [*Most impatiently.*] There is!

Olivia. You see!

Wisely I kept it from thee at the time;
Else, bloodshed had ensued!

Alas. [*With extreme impatience.*] Bloodshed! for what?

Olivia. Outrage long past!

Alas. [*Furiously.*] Outrage!—[*Recollects himself.*] Long past
is it?

Then tell it me, no fear I shall be rash!
No, nor yet angry! I shall look upon it
As a thing that's dead, and no more wage war with it
Than I would with a corse! Almagro offer'd thee
No outrage? [*Furiously.*

Olivia. There again!

Alas. [*Recovering himself.*] And if he did—
'Tis past and gone; so, dead.—Go on, Olivia,
Go on, my sister!

Olivia. You remember, don't you,
From long-protracted absence, coming home,
And finding me, whom you had left a girl,
Stolen into womanhood? Stolen, I may say;
For at that stage I had, indeed, arrived
Without my father's note, or e'en my own;
So change, by progress still before our eyes,
Is oft-times past, before we dream 'tis near.

Alas. That time, Olivia, I remember well!
Then first I felt I was a brother, when
The girl, I left, I found not; but, instead,
A woman newly ripen'd! You had on
The gear of other times! 'Twas quite outgrown,
And scantiest there where nature's bounty most
Upbraided lack of fulness! Oh, what thoughts
Of risks and wrongs, by woman run and borne,
Shot through my brain, succeeding one another
As lightning-flashes, when the welkin round
Is thick with thunder-storms!—awakening in me
Tinglings of feelings never touch'd before,
And summoning almost in palpable,
Distinct embodiment, the household virtues
To pass in solemn, stern array before me—
Among them honour chief, and chastity!

I sprang to thee and o'er thy shoulders threw
 Thy kerchief, snatch'd from thy surpriséd hand!
 The change pass'd o'er thee then, from frankest joy
 To see me back, to strangest wonderment!
 The change from that, to most alarm'd confusion,
 As, in a moment, burst on thee the thought
 What time had done, thou ne'er hadst ta'en account of,
 Till then reveal'd by that, thy brother's act!
 The statue that thou stood'st except the blush
 Which, prompted by that act, thy heart call'd up
 As 'twere to veil thy cheek, and answer for
 Thy earth-fix'd eye, that life had cast it there!
 I shall be old when I forget the hour
 I threw that kerchief o'er thee!

Olivia. [*Hesitating.*] Brother!

Alas. Well?

Olivia. [*Hesitating.*] One day—

Alas. Go on! what happen'd thee that day?

Olivia. [*Still hesitating.*] That kerchief—

Alas. Well?

Olivia. I cannot tell it thee!

I durst not even breathe it to my father!

[*Overpowered with confusion, and throwing herself on
 ALASCO'S neck.*]

Alas. You need not! Some one pluck'd it off!—Who
 was it?

Who was it?—fool!—who was it but Almagro!

The flood of light a little chink lets in!

How blind a man may be, yet think he sees!

How fast asleep, yet fancy he's awake!

How may he be cajoled—robb'd—cozen'd—gull'd—

Where for fair dealing he would stake his life,

As free as risk a counter on a card

With all the odds to back him!—it is clear!

Almagro's heart is rotten!—What have I done?

Olivia. What have you done, my brother!

Alas. What have I done?

You know, and ask!—Why, made Almagro Regent!

Almagro Regent, in my sister's place!

Given him command over myself, and worse,

O'er thee, to whom he did that violence

Turns all my blood to fire! how mayst thou fare.

Olivia. Remember you your comment, once you read

The story of Lucrece to me? You said

She used too late her dagger—that she chose

Most ill, the stain itself contracting, rather

Than bear the slanderous imputation,

Howe'er so base-begotten; that her error

The custom of her time could not atone for;

That she was more to pride a martyr, than

To chastity! unworthy setting up

A sample of a woman fit to copy!

Alas. Those very words thy brother's heart spoke to thee!

Olivia. Those very words thy sister's heart set down,
Never to be obliterated!—see! [*Drawing forth a dagger.*]

Alas. Thou shalt not come to such extremity!
O, let me think awhile my sister—go—
This is no home for thee!—Go!—Hold thee, sister,
In readiness to bear me company!
But let me with myself awhile commune,
There's something here wants calming—such a sea
Cannot at once go down, and give us leave
To put the vessel on her course again!

Olivia. Bless thee, Alasco!

[*Going.*]

Alas. Sister, stay!—The King!—
His life's in jeopardy!

Olivia. The King is safe!
I fear'd thee, brother,—durst not breathe it to thee!—
But he escaped last night by my contrivance!

Alas. O woman! clear in apprehension—prompt
In action, when her sympathies arouse her!
A mountain hast thou heaved from off my soul,
And for reproaches, take my blessings with thee!
Now leave me for a while!

Olivia. My heart sinks in me
At thought of losing sight of thee, my brother! [*Goes out.*]

Alas. How many things come back upon me, now,
That pass'd me by, before, unheeded by me,
To prove Almagro wanting!—There is Gomez!—
Gomez, he told me was a wretch!—had fail'd him
When trusted by him!—Now he hugs him!—Ay,
Gomez is now of service! There's Velasquez,
A man far likelier to overlook,
Than note a fault.—Almagro must have play'd
The viper to him, and Velasquez shuns him,
Lest he be stung again. There's Henriquez,
Blotches from head to foot, believe Almagro,
And he was hand in glove with him before,
For all his leprosy, when Henriquez
Was factor to his fortunes.—Blind Alasco!
Now I bethink me, where are Pedro, Carlos,
And twenty others, once his good companions?
True men and kindly!—Where are they? gone from him!
He comes!—untimely!—would I could avoid him.

Enter ALMAGRO and THERESA.

Alma. You know your duty—see that you perform it.
Let the reward that I have promised you
Remind you of obedience. Suffer her not
Out of your sight—nor be thrust off—nor humour'd;
Your answer—forced to it—“The Regent wills it.”
Not in a hurry though!

Ther. I shall observe.

[*Goes out.*]

Alma. Now am I jocund as the mariner
 Whose progress e'en before his reckoning runs,
 And, ere expected, shows his port to him—
 Whose vessel seems belovéd of the winds,
 Which follow her where'er she turns her prow.
 I am Regent!—That is power achieved—Alasco
 Speeds to the army, and Velasquez, with him.
 That is immunity to use my power!
 Olivia stays in Saragossa—that
 Is love achieved.—Oh! Opportunity!
 Thou favourer of wishes, com'st thou to me,
 And shall I let thee go again, and say
 Thou left'st me mine unblest?—No!—though I craved
 The help of fraud or force to effect possession.
 Fair measures first I'll try—they bring our ends
 Most happily about. So be't. Let's see—
 A quarrel is to be made up—a fault
 Acknowledged and atoned for—so, from foes,
 We turn to friends.—That's easy—but to turn
 From friends to lovers—there's the feat that taxes
 Both wit and labour! There's Ruphino, though—
 He hates me! Well!—the good of the republic
 May crave his absence hence—some honourable
 Employment—like Velasquez, and his son's!
 We'll find him such.—So now, to see Olivia;
 Admit my error, own it past forgiveness—
 The very surest way to make it venial—
 Dilate on my contrition—sigh for friendship,
 Without a hope of it—a warranty
 Especial and infallible that she
 Will find me hope enough—and here succeeding,
 To fair or foul means trust the rest;—

[*Going towards OLIVIA'S apartment, meets ALASCO.*
 Alasco!—

Here yet?—I swear thou art still a child, as much
 As in thy play-time years!

Alas. Almagro!—

Alma. Peace!

Thou mak'st me mad!—What are the thews of manhood
 Without the thoughts and deeds?—In patience' name,
 If thou wouldst bide with men, and rank with them,
 Be one of them, and act like them!—Balance here,
 Lounging upon the heel that should be smoking
 With rowels red with speed, at least ten leagues
 By this from Saragossa!

Alas. But, Almagro—

Alma. Nay, talk to children, not to me!—By our Lady,
 Thou art not a man!—A feebleness, Alasco,
 There is about you, hateful to my nature!
 An easiness that treats, as lightest things,
 Matters of gravest moment.—We have placed
 Our hopes and fears, our liberties and lives,

In a man's hands, as we believed; and lo!
He turns out to be a boy!

Alas. By your favour—

Alma. 'Sdeath!

'Tis injury to me!—foul injury
Return'd for all the good I have done for you!
How will men talk?—what will my credit come to,
For judgment or for justice? Fifty others
Had leap'd at such a post, not one of whom
Had so approved himself unworthy of it,
As thou hast done! How shalt I make defence,
When they allege to me, they know your charger
Stood cooling his mettle at the gate, the while
You play'd the page, in your sister's antechamber!

Alas. Where thou play'st visitor!—What brought thee
hither?

Almagro!—mark!—a brother speaks to you,
And tells you that the floor you stand upon
Henceforth to you is interdicted ground!
Mark!—interdicted by a brother's honour!
Who holds the trespasser 'gainst his commands
Responsible with his blood!

Alma. To me, Alasco!—

Do you say this to me?—to me—your friend?

Alas. Is it so, Almagro?—Art thou Alasco's friend?

Alma. Can I be otherwise?

Alas. Almagro, tell me,

Are you a man of whom his friend can say,
He knows his heart whene'er he hears his tongue;
Or one whose tongue alleges of his heart
Things that abide not there?

Alma. What do you mean?

Alas. What I say!—Almagro, are you my friend indeed?
Where's the reply ere well the question's done,
That, from loved lips, can't brook the loving wrong,
But, from one word divining all the rest,
The mouth of the propounder stops with flouts,
Which, while they chafe, assure him. Art thou my friend?
You are sullen!—Ill at ease, I will not say—
Why did you start when I said—"Ill at ease?"
You are *not* my friend!—when you declared you were so,
You spoke what was not true!

Alma. Sir!

Alas. Saint Iago!

'Tis come to "Sir!" The truth is out at last, then!
'Tis come to "Sir!" 'twixt you and me! There's chance then
That it may come to blows!—Is there, Almagro?
"Sir"—'Tis as clear as day!—It could not be!
The thing's impossible.

Alma. What is impossible?

Alas. That a strong stream should stop with frost, nor give
The eye of the observer time to wink,

Ere what was flood is ice.—I have been basking
In summer, dreaming on a bank of snow,
And freezing now awake! “Sir”—

Alma. You forget
I am Regent!

Alas. You are Regent?—Oh, you are Regent!
True!—true!—you are another kind of man!—
Of all anomalies, the most outrageous
Is this—that circumstances should make the man
More than the man himself—just as if men
Were no wit better than the meats they feed on,
Whose value varies by the mode of dressing;
That what, to-day, will bring one pistole only,
By change of cookery brings five to-morrow!
You are Regent? ’Tis too bad!—The brute, in this,
Fares far more rationally than his master,
For he is rated by his own properties,
And gives rank to kennel—takes none from it!
Who made you Regent?

Alma. Who?—the people!

Alas. I!

Alma. ’Tis false!

Alas. Ha! say you so?—Come on then! you’re
A traitor!

Alma. What?

Alas. You heard!—Is it possible?
Then was it true what some one told me once,
That when he threaten’d thee with chastisement,
Whereof he gave thee earnest with his tongue,
In terms the bearer better were struck dead,
Than unrevenged survive them, thou didst stand
E’en thus.

Alma. How?

Alas. Why the ’haviour of a sheet!
Anger, I know, turns pale as well as red;
But if it lacks the hue, it has the blow!—
My sister, recreant!—I will not draw
On one that dares not draw on me again,
Nor even wag my tongue at such a man!
“Man!” do I say?—Well, “man.”—I scorn to rail!

[*RUPHINO enters in the back-ground, and stopping
short, half-retires again.*

Alma. Alasco! you have spurn’d me!—shamefully
Aspersed my manhood!—and I bear it all,
For I am not a friend plays fast and loose!
Nay, wrong me more!—I will the more forbear.
Thou doubt’st it?—but a proof can face a doubt!
And I have one at hand, will make thee writhe,
That ever thou misus’dst me. Wait a little,
I’ll give thee time to cool,—provide my proof;
And then return, and we are friends again!

Ruph. Alasco!

[*Goes out.
Hastily advancing.*

Alas. Father!

Ruph. Hast thou been, Alasco,
A son to me?

Alas. In love,—but not in duty!

Ruph. In duty too, dost thou my bidding now!
Wilt do it?

Alas. Yes!

Ruph. Wilt swear to do it?

Alas. Yes;
I swear!

Ruph. He hears thee who remembers, boy!
Forthwith depart for thy command.—Velasquez
Waits with thy courser at the postern.—Fly!
Thou'lt find within his breast another heart
True to thee as thine own!—Confide in him!—

Alas. Almagro!—

Ruph. Peace!—Almagro means thee evil!
Thy sister's honour is in jeopardy—
I know what thou wouldst say.—It is too late!
She could not fly with thee, were she prepared,
Or were there means at hand, or were there time
To furnish them. She is betray'd!—beset!—
The safety which she cannot fly to,—thou
Must bring to her, my son, and speedily—
It must come speedily, if it come at all!

Alas. Why, father!—

Ruph. What!—in my extremity
Cannot I find a friend in my own son!
Thy sister, by Almagro's treason warn'd,
Has set the King at liberty, and word
Was by his secret escort brought that he
Had to the patriot force commission sent
With terms of such redress, as their demands,
O'erbearing as they were, durst ne'er lift eye to!
I should not wonder, met you now advancing,
And hand in hand, those who the other day
Bore weapons against weapons! There is rescue!
Safety! for me, thy sister!—all of us!
Away—away,—not by the common stair—
Almagro now ascends it, with his guards!
They come for thee—believe me for this once!
This passage to thy sister, by her lord
Reveal'd, by her to me,—and which were now
Portal to liberty, were she not watch'd
By spies, who dog her every footfall—safe
Without the postern will conduct thee.—Fly—
No word!—Thy oath!—Thy sister's honour!—Fly!

[ALASCO goes out.]

Enter ALMAGRO with Guards, and attended by NUNEZ and OMER.

Alma. [Speaking as he enters.] Secure the traitor!—only
now his sword
Was pointed 'gainst your Regent's heart.

Nunez. My lord,

Alasco is not here!—This is his father.

Alma. Not here!—I left him here!—where is the traitor?

Ruph. Inquire, Almagro, of thyself for him!

Alma. Where is thy son?

Ruph. Safe, monster, from thy fangs!

Alma. What! fled!—Go seek him in the room beyond.
Some nook will give him to you.—He could not fly!
Myself stood sentry on the stair.

[*All go out but ALMAGRO and RUPHINO.*

Ruph. You did?

You needs must love the friend you watch so well!

Alma. You mock at things make other men look
grave.

Ruph. What things?

Alma. Bonds!—maybe death!

Ruph. O Heav'n! this man
To talk of bonds and death to me that was
More than his equal yesterday!—'Tis thus
Fair enterprise falls into disrepute,
And the just fight is lost!—Some hollow heart
Makes common cause with the abettors; toils,
Suffers perhaps; draws on himself all eyes,
All trust, until their cause and he be one;
When gets he all he asks for,—sought for,—power!
The which, awhile, he wields to profit them;
But, now secure of, casts the mask aside,
Employs for his own ends, without consent
Of man or angel, until those that groan'd
At evil days gone by, now shake the head
And wish them back again!

Alma. Thy life's near spent!
Husband the little that remains of it.

Ruph. He husbands life who looks not to its length
But use, and uses it to glorify
The giver!

Alma. Dotard!—Hither comes your son!

Ruph. Turn not your face aside, nor move away;
You need not shrink from him, he does not come!

Re-enter NUNEZ and the others.

Alma. Is he not found?

Nunez. No!

Alma. No? He must be here!
He pass'd not forth!—I swear he pass'd not forth.
Where is your son, old man?—What smile you at?

Ruph. At your simplicity, Almagro.

Alma. Ay!

Ruph. Ay, sir, to ask a father for his son,
That you may give him up to butchery!
He is safe, sir, safe!—His father's life upon it!

Alma. Maybe!—Maybe!—He must be found!

Enter CORTEZ, hastily.

Cortez. The Regent?

Alma. Here, sir!

Cortez. Obedient to your highness' will,
I sought the King, in straiter custody
To place him.

Alma. Well, sir!—and you found him?

Cortez. No.

Alma. Treason on every side!—Produce your son!

Ruph. I cannot!

Alma. Tell us where you have bestow'd him.

Ruph. I will not!

Alma. Take him to the rack!

Ruph. The rack!—

What!—an old man like me?—Well, then, the rack!
Thou mock'st its strength, to waste it on a straw!

Nunez. My lord, forbear!

Alma. What!—Nunez?

Nunez. To this pass
Let it not come.

Cortez. Give ear, my lord, to Nunez!

Alma. Talk to a whirlwind!—Am I Regent, Cortez;
Or you, or Nunez?

Nunez. Hand will I have none
In such a deed.

Cortez. Nor I.

Alma. You will not?—Ay!—
Omer,—See it done!—You may withdraw, my friends.

[NUNEZ and CORTEZ retire.]

Away with him!

Ruph. When the command shall come
That summons thee away, thou'lt shrink from it,
As never shall my body from the rack!

[RUPHINO is taken out by OMER and Guards.]

Alma. Hence!—Now have I thought what Chaos was,
Before the world sprung out of it!—Immense
Perplexity of things!—Nothing, itself!
Naught individuality, but merging
Into some other thing. Ambition, Love,
Hatred, Revenge, Determination, Fear,
All holding sway together, but with strife
That makes a mock of rule! I cannot see
The light for darkness; darkness fails with light!
I cannot stop,—nor yet, for stops, go on!—
I am not anywhere,—yet everywhere!
Somewhere to fix!—some shape to give resolve!
It takes a form, and straightway vanishes
Into some other—then another yet,
Until confusion reels!

Enter PEDRO.

Pedro. My lord!

Alma. Well, Pedro?
Has the old man confess'd?

Pedro. No.

Alma. No!—Enough;
Remove him from the rack!

Pedro. That duty, death
Has spared us.

Alma. Dead?

Pedro. He is dead!

Alma. I feel his frost!
He freezes more than I, but feels it not!
As with the thunder comes the clearing up,
So ends this shock my chaos, and my thoughts
Begin to settle—into ruin!—Ruin?—
Come ruin, then, but not to me alone!

[*Goes out.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Ante-room to OLIVIA'S Chamber.*

*Two Attendants variously occupied—a knock at the door—which
one of them opens.*

Enter ALMAGRO, ANTHONIO, and OMER.

Alma. You are dismiss'd till morning.—You will find
Your couches in the quarter that we spoke of.—
Withdraw; and mind, thanks but precede rewards,
Not stand for them, with us! Meantime we thank you.
Good night.—

[*Attendants go out, ALMAGRO locks the door after
them.*]

Antonio!

[*ANTHONIO comes forward.*]

Are you a man of nerve?

Anth. I dare aver I am.

Alma. 'Tis a great property,
Which more avails men in this world of barter
Than what they buy or sell;—you know what I mean?
The nerve that gains its point, no matter how!
You will perform the ceremony?

Anth. Yes.

Alma. Howe'er she may protest, gainsay, entreat,
Threaten, change colour, weep, shriek, swoon away—
It may come to that—in any case whatever,
You will not halt, but on?

Anth. I shall go on!

Alma. And I shall render the responses, both
For her, and for myself. Retire and wait

In the Oratory—That's the door to it.— [ANTHONIO goes out.
Omer!

Omer. My lord!

Alma. 'Tis likely, as I told you,
Your aid may stead me; in which case, approve
The Moor may boast in you a worthy son.
You will see her tears, as though you saw them not!
And hear her cries, as though you heard them not!
And limbs, whose tenderness dissuades enforcement,
Reply to as the vice would, say it held them!
Behind these hangings take thy station, till
My summons asks thy aid—till then keep still!

Omer. I shall observe, my lord. [OMER conceals himself.

Alma. And I reward!
'Tis near the time she makes her toilet up
For the night.—Anon she'll summon her attendants,
And missing their reply, no doubt come forth.

[The clock strikes.

Hark!—Her remembrancer!—Listen!

Olivia [within]. Therese!

Alma. Well answer'd, silence!

Olivia. What!—Therese!—Therese!

Christina, where are you?

[Enters, without perceiving ALMAGRO, who retires a little.

Where are my maids?

I am left alone by them—and purposely!

I am sure of it!—Alasco does not come,

Nor message has he sent me!—Flight he talk'd of,

And still am I in Saragossa! Oh!

What mountain huge and inaccessible

Has fate heaved up between us?—Has he seen

Almagro? tax'd him with the shame he did me?

And, for his honest rashness, answer'd with

His liberty—perhaps his life? That man

Is match for all extremities!—That man,

I have heard my father say, to gain his end,

Would stop at nought—not blood!—My father, too!

'Tis past the time he used to visit me,

An hour; nor has he come—no word from him!

My motions watch'd—egress, debarr'd me, from

The quarters set apart for me!—the cause,

Reasons of state—"the Regent's will;" but why

His will, or why those reasons, held from me—

The door! perhaps 'tis free. Lock'd on me still!

[Tries to open it.

Heaven is not lock'd!—There is my only refuge!

I'll in, nor other couch enjoy to-night

Save what my knees can make them of the ground,

Whence shall my soul look up to heaven till morning!

[Retiring, is intercepted by ALMAGRO.

Almagro!

Alma. Not so fast, Olivia—stop ;
Or, if you will return into your chamber,
I'll pass along with you.

Olivia. Hoa!—help there!

Alma. [*Grasping her wrist.*] Silence!
Shriek not!

Olivia. My wrist is broken, sir.

Alma. I grasp'd it,
But not with undue force.

Olivia. Look there!—the blood
In answer to your fingers!—Fie!—a man
And use a woman so! Where are my women!—
Wherefore attend they not?—why not obey
My summons?—where are they?

Alma. Hence, by my orders ;
Far out of reach of hearing—as all others
Who might intrude upon the conference
I mean to hold with you!—You will call in vain!

Olivia. Confer with thee!—here?—at this time o' night,
Alone?—a man?—and one I shudder at
In company, and in the open day?
Confer!—Begone, sir!—If respect, on thy part,
Does not instruct thee to recross my threshold,
Let loathing upon mine! Think what I am, sir,
And if thou hast forgot thou art a man,
Let that remind thee on't, and make thee blush,
And drive thee from my presence!

Alma. What art thou?

Olivia. What am I, sir?—a wife!—I am a wife!—
A name that's haply borne by one that's weak,
But gives a power to her, to cope with which,
He that would mock her must make up his mind
To abide the wrath of the stern sanctities
Which, in the names of father, brother, husband,
Protect the wearer's honour!

Alma. With your leave,
At least a word or two before we part.

Olivia. No! not a syllable!

Alma. Without your leave, then!

Olivia. Dare you compel me?

Alma. If you force me!—Girl,
You are in my power!

Olivia. Heavens! and for this same man
My brother would have laid his life down! [*To herself.*]
Where

Is my brother?—At the thought of strait to him,
Danger or worse, how, all at once, my heart
Casts off the shackles of congealing fear,
And feels at large, with all its faculties!

[*Resolutely approaches ALMAGRO, without looking at
him, through abhorrence.*]

Almagro, where is my brother?

Almagro. [*Confounded momentarily.*] Where!

Olivia. Take time;

The answer's not at hand—not to be found
Except by dint of searching for't—take time!
Yet why delay at all?—Truth has no answer
Save one—if that won't serve, there's falsehood with
A thousand!—Take the first of them—from first
To last, they are all the same!—Is he alive?

Alma. He is!

Olivia. Where is he?

Alma. Gone to his command,
As I suppose.

Olivia. As you suppose! You met
Before he went?

Alma. I think we did.

Olivia. You think!
You had no words?

Alma. Words!

Olivia. Words! You did not quarrel?

Alma. Quarrel!

Olivia. No mortal strife fell out between you?
No swords were drawn, nor daggers, yet, pluck'd forth,
Were there?

Alma. My hand fall from my side, if sword
Or dagger quitted sheath of mine to-day!

Olivia. [*Aside.*] No thunder yet, and thunder-clouds all
round!

Out of such pitch and wrack a bolt must come!—

My father! how is it with him? *Almagro,*

How fares it with my father? where is he?

Or access, hither, is prevented him,

Or, hence, he bears my brother company,

Or something or another has befallen him.

Why don't you speak, *Almagro*? [*Looking at him.*] Gracious
powers!

Your face, which scarce till now I lifted eye to,

Is not the same! but changed, and horribly.

How you remind me of a wretch I saw

Taken in the act of murder once! He had pass'd me

An hour before, a hale young man. The change

An hour had made in him! He had aged a life

In that brief hour—and so have you since last

I look'd upon you, near as brief a lapse!

Almagro, where is my father? Tell me, man!

What takes away your breath, or strikes you dumb?—

I am not your accusing spirit—I am only

My father's child! Are you his murderer?—

He is murder'd!

Alma. [*by an effort recovering himself*]. Well may wonder
gasp to meet,

From lips so loved, question of act so hateful!

Listen and interrupt me not.—Thy vows

Thy father-King has all absolved thee from ;
Thou art free to wed again, and wed to me
This very hour shall see thee !

Olivia. Wed to thee !

Alma. You heard me, did you not ?

Olivia. Hast thou encounter'd

The horror of the wolf-pack, as, at night,
The howl at distance on the mountain road
Admonish'd thee, when hunger was abroad
Roaming ravine and steep, cut off from food,
As the earth lay entomb'd in frozen snow ?
I have, until my blood almost congeal'd,
My joints began to lose their faculty,
And, but for help, I must have dropp'd and lain,
Incapable of motion as a stone !
'Twas nothing to the thought of wedding thee !—
Though that I know a thing impossible !—
Not with the wolf-pack so ! knew I the track
The famish'd monsters would be sure to come ;
Sooner would I lie in it, bound hand and foot,
Than risk the chance would make me bride to thee !
Thy hand, presenting me the bridal ring,
I would recoil from as it brought to me
My brother's corse ! Yea, as 'twere reeking with
My father's blood !—Preserve me, Heaven ! he looks
Again the very heart and soul of murder !

Alma. [*Recovering himself.*] I'll speak to thee once more
and then I'll act.

Observe ! Within this quarter, where thou bidest,
There breathe not any can be hindrance to me !
The forms and agents, that make man and wife
Are ready !—Sure as in that chamber lies
Thy couch, and his, thou call'dst aforetime lord—
That couch receives another lord to-night !
Consent !

Olivia. I think—and madden while I think !
O husband, where art thou !—Alasco !—Father !
A wife ! a child !—a sister !—and no help !

Alma. Consent !—provoke not force !

Olivia. I dare you, wretch !

Ay, woman as I am—weak and alone—
I execrate, abhor you, and defy you !

Alma. What, ho !—within there !

[*OMER and ANTHONIO advance.*]

Olivia. [*Draws a dagger.*] Is it so ? behold, then !
This talisman will I defeat thee with,
Summoning him, with whom, to side with me,
I am more than match for all who come against me !
Witness, e'en you, [*to OMER and ANTHONIO*] the act that
wrecks my life,
To save my honour, is not mine, but his
Who on this dread extremity impels me !—

Mine honour!—precious for itself, past life,
But doubly precious for my dear lord's sake;
In faith to whom my heart pours out the blood,
No drop of which was e'er rebellious to him.

[OMER arrests her arm as she is going to stab herself;
she struggles desperately with him—and, at last, falls
fainting into his arms.]

Alma. Prevent her—Oh, well done!—What, is she dead?
[Trumpet at a great distance.]

Omer. She has fainted.

Alma. Hark!—what hear you!

Omer. I mistake,
Or 'tis a trumpet.

Alma. From without the walls?

Omer. I thought so.

Alma. There it is again!—It speaks——

Omer. Like a friend.

Alma. I hope so.

Cortez [without]. Where is the Regent?

Alma. [Unlocking the door.] Here!

Enter CORTEZ.

Cortez. Alasco and the King, their powers combined,
Approach the gates—A herald in their names
Demands admittance, which the crowd, not only,
But e'en the soldiery, to yield incline.
Ruphino's death is bruited far and wide,
And discontent thereon is open-mouth'd.
Still of your special friends the most stand true,
The which to keep behoves you show yourself.

Alma. I come to them!—Away!—I follow you.

Observe my signet—should I send it to you, [CORTEZ goes out.
To OMER, aside.]
The purpose now you balk'd yourself effect.
'Tis but her own intent that you fulfil;
So may the act light on your conscience sit.
That done, you know where lie my coffers—Take
The key and help yourself!—Attend me, father!

[Goes out with ANTHONIO. Alarum and tumult, without.]

Re-enter the Priest.

Priest. This signet from the Regent.

Omer. What has happen'd?

Priest. Almagro, striving to retain the city,
Was by his own abettors overborne.
The gates have welcomed in their former master,
With whom Alasco enters now; which issue
As soon as he foresaw, Almagro gave
This signet to me with injunction strict
To place it in thy hand. I pray thee, Moor,
What means it?

Omer. What concerns not thee to know !

Priest. Why whither wouldst thou take her ? That way lies Her chamber.

Omer. Pay no heed to what I do !—
Nor follow me !—The task I've ta'en in hand
Abides not lookers on ! Stay where thou art !
[*Shows the dagger.*] Look to thyself ! Dismiss all heed of me.
[*Bears OLIVIA off.*]

Priest. I little dream'd of this ! That weapon, now,
So bright, how will it show anon ? I thank
The Moor, for wishing me away ! Too much
My share, already, in the deed of blood,
He goes to do ! Might I not stop it ? No !
He knows my business here !—I am compromised !
Say that I brought him to the scaffold, thither
He would not pass alone ! Clean hands behoves
The man who dares to prate of filthy ones ! [Goes out.]

SCENE II.—*The Corridor of the Palace.*

Enter VELASQUEZ and ANDREAS, meeting NUNEZ.

Velas. Saw you Alasco, as you came along ?

Nunez. No, sir.

Velas. The same response I meet from all :
Strange, how I lost him all at once !—We enter'd
The citadel together ! Where can he be ?
Only a word or two I changed with one,
Apart, who drew me to confer with him,
And straight returning found Alasco vanish'd.

Nunez. Remember'st who was with him ?

Velas. Cortez.

Nunez. Right !

Myself remark'd them—overheard them speaking,
Touching the manner of Ruphino's murder,
The while Almagro, guarded, walk'd before.

Velas. Almagro ? You remind me now of him.
Him, also, did I miss.

Nunez. At the same time ?

Where'er they are, most like they are together !

Velas. The chance o'erleaps your guess—Be sure they are !
At such a juncture, save his father's death,
And him the hated instrument of it, nothing
Could so engross Alasco that he leaves
The throne untended that gives amnesty
To wide revolt ; and, for the grace it deigns,
Receives whole hearts with thrice-sworn homage back !
Let's search for good Alasco.—Near Almagro,
Chain'd though he were already—he's no match,
For such a maze of wily villany !
Speed—Bestir yourself—He must be found ! [They go out.]

SCENE III.—*The Dungeon of Torture. Around, the various implements. In the front, on one side, the rack; on the other, the block.*

Enter ALASCO,—stops and looks after him.

Alas. Why do you hesitate? Come in, Almagro!
Come in.

Enter ALMAGRO, PEDRO, OMER, and Guards.

Alma. A strange place this for conference!

Alas. It is a silent and retired place:

What fitter then? Here are no eaves-droppers!

No thin partitions which invite the ear

While they repel the eye!—Free speech may here

Make free! Your sword, good jailer, leave with me,

And lay it noiselessly on yonder bench;

Then, with your friends retire; and as you go,

Make fast the door. An hour hence, come again!—

By then we shall have done. There for your pains.

[*Aside to Jailer.*

[*Gives a purse to the Jailer, who retires with Guards, locking the door after them, having previously laid his sword as directed. OMER remains concealed.*

Alma. Why does he lock the dungeon door?

Alas. To keep

Intrusion out. Such friends as you and I,

Sharing their hearts loving with one another,

Endure not bystanders when they confer!

Is it not so?

Alma. Why are we here?

Alas. Almagro!

Why are we anywhere but by the will

Of Heaven?—Its will be done!—Will you say so?

Alma. Why should I not?

Alas. Why, Heaven has given command

To men, they shall not murder; and 'tis written,

Who sheddeth blood shall bleed!—Sit down, Almagro,

On yonder engine.—I shall seat me here;

Such things awaken thoughts of seriousness,

And serious is the work we have in hand!—

Won't you sit down?—Decline you the fair seat?

You shrink from it! You are a man of ruth!

You know full well it is the couch of groans,—

Of sweat-drops, wrung by dint of agony,—

Of death-pangs, thick and sharp, though lingering,

In one of which more writhing, than *he* knows

Who, limb by limb, is broken on the wheel!—

And yet, when I bethink myself again,

I wonder you should loathe the instrument!

For look at me!—I breathe as free as ever;

My arms are folded o'er a heart at ease;

Its wonted hue, methinks, invests my cheek,

And I am sitting on the very block,
Yet never lifted axe to lop a head!—
Come!—take your seat, Almagro!

Alma. What do you mean?

Alas. I'll tell you, answer me a word or two!
Did I not trust you?—did I not love you?—both
With the simplicity of a very boy?
You know I did.—If not, why, say so.—Well?

Alma. I do not say so.

Alas. No?—so far, so well.

Alma. What do you purpose?—Wherefore bring me hither?

Alas. I haven't done yet!—Was't not my pride, Almagro,
To build you up in men's esteem above
Myself?—Whene'er they gave Alasco credit
For this or that desert,—did he not mount
Your merits on his own? If he did not,
Deny it.

Alma. Nay, I don't deny it.

Alas. Well,
Again!

Alma. Alasco, this is freezing work!

Alas. Not so, Almagro,—all the frost's to come!
You were a man of doubtful rank, Almagro—
I mean in men's esteem—when first I knew you;
Among our comrades, some would rate you low,
Some high, though doubtingly; none very high!
I raised you to the top, and kept you there;
Yea, when the people's choice between us lay
In even balance; 'gainst myself, I gave
The casting vote, at once, that made you Regent!
Now, to the credit side—my debts to you!
They are few, but large, Almagro!—Foremost, then,
A sister's sacredness profaned!—That trespass,
Had I learn'd it, then, from all the rest had saved thee—
Tell *me* how a man a modest woman treats,
And I'll tell *you* what kind of man he is!
In the next place—my credit undermined—
You know who Cortez is?—and with the smile,
As of a friend, that play'd fast and loose,
My freedom jeopardized—perhaps my life!—
And last of all—ay,—look upon the rack!—
You might as well have laid an infant on it,
You would as soon!—I believe it!—last of all,
My father, like a sound leaf withering,
Which if allow'd to hang its little time,
Falls with a breath that hardly stirs the spray,
Thou wouldst not suffer dreamingly to die,
But brought'st, with heart to ruth impenetrable,
As flint to dew, to an untimely end,
Forestalling sleep with torture!

Alma. You forget!

Your father hated me—What progeny,

Except the serpent, should the serpent have?
 You thwarted me!—Who would not push aside
 The let that stood 'twixt his soul's wish and him?
 Your sister drove me mad with love, and spurn'd me!

Alas. You never knew what love was!—Love!—What! love
 A virtuous maiden, and, with no inclining
 On her part towards thee, dare to violate
 Even the gauze that veils her modest face?
 He ne'er knew love—can never know—who knows not
 Woman, unlapséd is, next to Heav'n, most sacred!
 Say that the man, who would profane her, loves her!
 And if he does, brutes love as much as he!
 You ne'er went mad with anything so holy!

Alma. Why have you brought me to this place?

Alas. To die!

That thou shouldst bring me to the pass, Almagro,
 That makes me tell thee this!—me!—thy Alasco!
 Thine even more, in cherishing, than ever
 He was his own; whose brain, heart, body, limbs,
 At any time sooner than for himself,
 He had laid down for thee!—When a gaunt bear
 Rush'd from a thicket towards thee, once, who lay,
 Ere thou couldst wink, struggling upon the ground
 'Twixt thee and him?—calling to thee to fly,
 So all forgetful was he of himself,
 Although entangled in the deadly hug
 Of the fell monster? With my forest-knife
 I saved this arm its blood,—so saving thee—
 This arm, now nerved to kill thee!—[*Drawing.*—How can
 this be?

How has it come to pass?—Whence this blank wreck
 Of love, so stanchly built, I could have sworn
 The storm blew never yet could break it up!
 Tell me!—for I am wild with wondering!

Alma. I wonder too, but am not wild withal,
 That thou shouldst wish to take thyself the life
 Thou knowest to be forfeited.

Alas. Why, who
 So fit to be thy executioner?—
 To fill the office whose revolting nature
 Flesh creeps at so, its functionary sickens,
 With loathing, those who only look upon him?—
 Who, for an office so unnatural,
 So fit, as such a trespasser 'gainst nature
 As I am?—to a stranger to my blood
 Who gave that trust, which to the source of it
 I owed, but would not give!—Except for me,
 Thou ne'er hadst laid my father on the rack;
 'Twas I who gave thee power o'er his grey hairs,
 I was his murderer as well as thou.
 Of felons men make executioners!

Alma. My blood be on thy soul, so shedd'st thou it!

Alas. Almagro, I *will* shed it!—thou must bleed,
 And by this hand; but I will use this hand
 As it becomes a soldier and a man!—
 Here is another sword!—This brave revenge
Breathed I the wish to take, I were prevented!
 The meanest hind in Arragon would flout
 The thought of honourable chastisement
 To one so fallen as thou art,—but I hold it
 A debt due to a father by his son,
 And mean to pay it in full!—No further parley!
 What is infirm in thee—as well I know,
 But must not now cast thought to—overlook!
 Come, guard thy life!—strike manfully at mine!
 'Tis the last time its bane may prove thy safeguard!

Alma. Hold yet a moment!—thou wouldst give me, sure,
 Fair play! Thy weapon is the longer one!—

Alas. Measure it!—There!

[*Gives his sword to ALMAGRO, who throws it away.*]

Alma. Lo! thou who, now, so freely,
 Wouldst shed Almagro's blood, and, boastingly,
 Wouldst make a merit on't; look to thine own!
 Not by Alasco's honourable sword,
 Nor by the scaffold, shall Almagro die!
 Such means am I provided with as scoff
 At aught the executioner, or thou
 Canst perpetrate against me. Mark, Alasco!
 Almagro dies, but thou shalt die before him;
 For in thy weakness, which I ever loath'd,
 I see the bane that to this close has brought
 My dearest hopes and me! Yet, ere I use
 The vantage which thy trustfulness—I thank it
 For the last time—has given me, it is fit
 Thou know the full extent of what thou owest me.
 Thou thought'st thy debt on the score of old Ruphino
 Was large enough; but what will be thy wonder
 When I shall tell thee thou mayst add to that
 Another larger yet? Know then, Alasco—
 Soon as the tide of fortune 'gan to ebb,
 Sudden as it set in, and 'gainst the chance
 Of aught which thou, and those in league with thee,
 Could practise 'gainst me, I secured myself;—
 By my contrivance did thy sister's dagger
 Drink her own blood!

Alas. Now let thy sword drink mine!
 I will not swerve to avoid thee!—lift my arm
 To hinder thee!—move so much as a finger!
 I am a man the earth must loathe to bear!
 All who live on't must loathe! who loathes himself!

Alma. Loathe, as thou mayst, thyself, I loathe thee more.
 An end to words, save such as deeds can speak.

[*As ALMAGRO is on the point of rushing upon ALASCO,*
OMER discovers himself, and confronts him.]

Omer. An end to deeds of thine! Alasco lives—
 Ruphino lives!—Olivia lives!—None dies
 Except the Moor, and he but dies in name;
 Dies, that the Prince—Alasco's brother, and
 Ruphino's son—may live the husband of
 Olivia! See! Wake from thy dreams of guilt,
 Rouse thee!—and die.

[*PEDRO enters, conducting VELASQUEZ, followed by
 RUPHINO, OLIVIA, the KING, &c.—ALMAGRO drops
 his sword.*

Alas. My father!—sister!—Is it reality?

Olivia. It is, Alasco! Thanks to the gracious prince,
 Whose love for me transform'd him, thus, and brought
 To Saragossa, where he counted on
 Concealment from a friend—my tongue refuses
 To rate him less—who, though of calling harsh,
 He knew to be of kindly heart and true.

Alas. [*To the PRINCE.*] What shall I say to thee?

Prince. Call me thy brother!

King. As hence, thy sister I shall call my child!

Alma. [*Aside.*] Destroy'd by those I deem'd my instruments!
 Frustrated in revenge, in love, and hate!
 What fair set-off 'gainst such discomfiture?
 The gibbet cheated, or the block, or wheel!
 Could we cheat Heaven!—No circumventing there!
 What's this I see?—Instead of the huge World,
 A film; and what before was shadowy,
 The World to come, condensing into vast
 Enormous substance, insupportable
 To thought! The drug asserts its potency!
 This is the death-sweat that bedews my palms,
 My forehead and my lip, and like a cold
 And slimy serpent, coiling round my frame,
 With its loathed folds, my very marrow chills.

King. What man is he, that yonder stands and lives,
 Yet seems in mortal agony?

Alas. Almagro.

King. What!—he?—then has he look'd upon the sun
 For the last time!—The rack shall deal with him.
 No death-bed half so fit. Let's leave him to it. [*Going.*

Alas. Oh no, my liege!

King. Thou wouldst not plead for him!
 Up! up! thy knee rebels, young man, to bend
 'Gainst nature!—justice!—Earth and Heaven, themselves,
 To supplicate for him whom they condemn!
 Against thy father's life thou makest suit,
 Against thy sister's honour—not to name
 The wrong he meditated 'gainst thyself!
 Forbear, young man. Why hang you thus your head,
 And still the posture keep that casts it down?
 What would you ask for?

Alas. Time for penitence.

A month! Well, then, a week! If not a week,
A day! Between the attempt, sir, and the act
There is a difference; so should there be
Between the pains with which we visit them.
The crimes he dies for were not perpetrated;
No victim calls for retribution.
Spare him!—spare him! We were boys together.
Howe'er it changes with us on life's road,
The sunny start all intervals breaks through,
And warms us with the olden mood again!
The hearty laugh of youth is in mine ear,
And there stands he, who shared it with me; now
A woful bankrupt; while the rich possessions
I counted lost, are all my own again.
I can't forbear. Say that I hold my tongue,
My eyes will speak; you see they do without;
And for the playmate's sake implore thee spare
The man, although a weak and guilty one!

King. Against my judgment does my heart give way,
Corrupted by your tears. His life is yours:
Do with it what you list!

Alas. It shall be spared.
An exile shall he live to die in penitence!
Almagro!

Pedro. Hush! He dies by poison, sir!
I know the signs. He makes a sudden end!
His spirit's gone—it fled with that groan!

Alas. The pardon you permitted, Heav'n denies him!
Its justice and its mercy are its own!

END OF THE ROSE OF ARRAGON.

THE LIFE OF

JOHN RUSKIN
BY
JOHN RUSKIN
IN TWO VOLUMES
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LONDON
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THE SECRETARY:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.



TO JOHN FORSTER, ESQ.,

IN

GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS RENDERED

TO THE AUTHOR,

IN

THE COURSE OF HIS DRAMATIC CAREER,

This Play

IS DEDICATED.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>The King</i>	Mr. RYDER.
<i>Duke of Gaveston</i>	Mr. G. BENNETT.
<i>Lord Sherbrooke</i>	Mr. HUDSON.
<i>Lord Byerdale</i>	Mr. PHELPS.
<i>Lord Sunbury</i>	Mr. WALDRON.
<i>Sir George Barkley</i>	Mr. GRAHAM.
<i>Sir Richard Fenwick</i>	Mr. LYNNE.
<i>Sir John Friend</i>	Mr. MELLON.
<i>Sir William Parkyn</i>	Mr. ROBERTS.
<i>Colonel Green</i>	Mr. MACREADY.
<i>Wilton</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Harrison</i>	Mr. LAMBERT.
<i>Charnock</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Armstrong</i>	Mr. SELBY.
<i>Williams</i>	Mr. YARNOLD.
<i>Page</i>	Mr. STANTON.
<i>Lady Laura Gaveston</i>	Miss HELEN FAUCIT.
<i>Emmeline</i>	Mrs. WIGAN.

Conspirators, &c. &c.

THE SECRETARY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—LORD BYERDALE'S *Study*.—WILTON *seated at a table in the act of writing*.—*Several folded letters before him, other letters lying open, papers, &c.*

Wilt. That memory should feed itself!—wax stronger
In its impression, without agency
Of that which wrought it; till the simulation—
For e'en so much it is—grows palpable
As the original—holds commune with
Our ears and eyes, yet all's within ourself!
At first her image was a dreamy thing
That came and went, and might, for aught I deem'd,
Have gone for ever—now 'tis ever with me!
Substantial presence! steadfast constancy!
I write, I read, I talk, and breaking off
In listless absence, to myself return
In company with her! She is my theme
That supersedes all others! Why is this?
What do I nourish? Hope in spite of hope!
Madness of wishes—never to be bless'd!
Her groom is not beneath her more than I,
The secretary of a haughty lord!
His clerk!—that in his counsels holds no share
More than his pen! What better should I be?—
A man who claims no core of kith or kin
In the wide world! I had a friend—a good
And gracious one—who foster'd me, to play
A higher part. Compell'd by urgent cause
To travel, to this lord he left the care
Of my advancement—left, as to a friend!
But friends at second-hand are doubtful ones!
Where will it end?—O perfect imaging
Of sweetness!—grace!—aspect of soul and form
Most rich in all that man desires in woman!
Rare excellence!—Why, where am I again?
Along with her! Gazing upon her—rapt
With marvel at the glory of her presence!

[LORD BYERDALE *enters*.—*Stops short, and stands observing WILTON'S abstraction*.—*Advances and addresses him impatiently*.

Lord By. So! Are those letters finished?

Wilt. But the seals
And superscriptions.

Lord By. Get them out of hand !
He grows abstracted. Lady Laura's tone
Had matter in it when she ask'd for him.
Why minds he me of her ? She values much,
I hear, the service which he render'd her.
A man of prowess is my secretary,
And presence too ! 'Tis not of her he thinks ?
Think of an empress !—Does she think of him ?
A lady with a will, as I am told !
A judge of merits !—does not take a year
To tell her mind !—That children should have minds !
Be she not of the mind to wed my son,
When he shall sue her—which he shall to-day—
Look to't his Grace of Gaveston ! He must plot !
He would reseate the Stuart !—Would he so ?
Eyes are upon his Grace he wots not of !
She ask'd for Wilton—never named my son !
The very man, indeed, he is wherewith
Romancists matches disproportionate
Contract—wed pages with their mistresses !
Would my Lord Sunbury had kept at home,
Not palm'd on me his seemly *protégé* !
He roams to France, and finds a prison there !
There's something in his presence troubles me.
So sat my brother when he play'd the clerk,
With sword on thigh, rather than pen in hand ;
You saw the soldier, whatsoe'er he did !
Is it his son ? I shall be soon resolved !
My trusty messenger returns to-day.

Wilt. [*Rising.*] My lord, they are ready.

Lord By. Go and post them, sir,
With your own hand. Tarry, sir ; you will pass
His Grace of Gaveston's house ; and should you call—

Wilt. Call *there*, my lord ?

Lord By. Yes ; you *do* call there ?

Wilt. No.

Lord By. You have been there ?

Wilt. No, my lord.

Lord By. Go, post the letters ! [WILTON goes out.
How far above his errand is his gait !
I could believe my brother living still,
And striding forth the door !—*He goes not there.*
'Tis well he's modest ! Will there come the day
When I shall see him knocking at the gate
As though he were at home ? Would he were hence !
Why did I ever see him ? Ha ! Who's come ?

[To WILLIAMS, who enters.

Will. My lord, your messenger to Ireland sent.

Lord By. Admit him. Fear or hope is now at end.
Welcome ! What bring you ? [To HARRISON, who enters.

Har. [*Giving papers.*] For your lordship these.
Lord By. [*To HARRISON, who goes out.*] Go, get refresh'd!
 [*Reads.*] "They never reach'd the ship!—
 "Landed again ten miles below the creek!"
 They told me false then. Gold finds out the truth!
 So both survived! But Leonard now is dead,
 And for the nephew—thanks to self-will'd love—
 He breathes without his name! What fear I, then?
 What though he be my eldest brother's son! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*Hyde Park.*

Enter COLONEL GREEN and WILTON.

Wilt. Sir, I would walk alone—Men may take leave
 To choose their own acquaintance! Frankly, you
 Are hardly to my taste—What are you, sir?

Green. What am I?—Why the man that wears this suit,
 That owns this trunk, these thews, these features!—Well!
 Are you content?—or would you learn my name
 And family? Beware, sir! Tell your own.

Wilt. I cannot!

Green. You are right!—To say "No more
 "Can I," were flippantly to answer you;
 Still, as I yet have held it wisdom, when
 With wit or truth we must part company,
 To let the lighter go, I claim the knowledge
 Which you confess to lack.

Wilt. You know my name
 And family?

Green. I know my own.

Wilt. Not mine!

Green. What then? Is't matter for despondency?

Wilt. The man that toils along a weary road
 Beneath a burthen, and, miscounting, thinks
 The time is come, at last, to lay it down,
 With weight augmented takes it up again
 To bear it onward still.

Green. You are not yet
 Of age.

Wilt. How know you that?

Green. What matter how,
 So that I know? The knowledge on't is neither
 Murder nor theft! It might be treason—but
 It is not that. What friend have you beside
 The Earl of Sunbury?

Wilt. How know you he's
 My friend?

Green. Why ply a bootless labour twice?
 I know it. That content you!—Who besides
 Rank in the list, more, often, fill than ought?

Wilt. I count but one—Lord Sherbrooke.

Green. Son of him

You're secretary to—Lord Byerdale.

Wilt. You seem to know me well!

Green. I seem? I do!

Lord Byerdale!—is he your friend too?

Wilt. No.

Green. Nor friend to any who deserve a friend!

Wilt. Who are you, sir?

Green. You have been bred at college.

You have won honours there—and high ones, too.

A college is a place to sharpen wit,

Or ought to be. A slight hint should suffice;

And yet, it seems, you cannot take a broad one.

Wilt. Sir, I love openness and honour.

Green. Right!

And so do I. I mean you not to know me!

So much for openness!—and, as to honour,

Judge me as you find me!

Wilt. Thereby judging you,

How shall I rate you in the property

In question last; when, calmly looking on,

You suffer'd lawless violence to leaguer

A noble lady and her sire, nor stirr'd

A finger to their rescue?

Green. Motives, sir,

Give shape to facts, which often change them

To things the most diverse from what they seem.

Thus far know mine—I weigh'd the risk, was run,

And framed my conduct to the amount of it.

A score of crowns to needy gentlemen

Was worth, perhaps, the violence they did

Their better natures, so to practise on

A lady's fright. In these disjointed times,

Try as you may, things will not go by rule!

William of Nassau fills the throne to-day—

Wilt. [*Interrupting him.*] Long may he fill it, sir, and hand
it down

An heir-loom with a people's guarantee

To an unfailing race!

Green. [*Vehemently.*] Youth, 'twas not thus!—

[*Checks himself.*]

But those who left you in your infancy,

To take the course which others counted best,

Have but themselves to thank! I'll not be one

To check the faith, that, now, must bear thee through!

Wilt. You are a man of honour.

Green. By my foes

I have been counted so. Where left we off?

Where it were best we leave the argument.

Wilt. One word, sir, to go back.

Green. Say on!

Wilt. From what
You said just now, I think I must have friends
I know not of—

Green. You have.

Wilt. Who are they?

Green. Yet

You may not know.

Wilt. But shall I ever know?

Green. As sure as life holds on with them and you!

Now to the cause that makes you jealous of me—

My passive bearing at a certain time.

Your arm achieved what mine forbore to do—

Mark me!—forbore!—rescued the noble sire

And yet more noble child.

Wilt. More noble?

Green. Yes;

Better! You have seen them?

Wilt. No.

Green. You would be welcome.

Hast thought upon the maid?—I see thou hast.

Wilt. Sir!

Green. Are you vapour? Do I see you now,
And now are you away?

Wilt. What mean you, sir?

Green. A minute since I was a man of honour!

Wilt. You are so still.

Green. And such shall be approved.

So trust you me!—Hast thought upon the maid?

Wilt. I have!

Green. 'Twas fit!—'Twas fair!—'Twas paying back
What you received—for she has thought of you!

Mark!—At the moment that you stood her friend,

She grew your love!—Youth's in a blaze, and sees

Not half what passes round it!—When to flight

You put her enemies, you little thought

That, after all your pains, the maid was robb'd!

Wilt. Robb'd!—

Green. Of her heart—I saw it on the arm
Where but her figure seem'd to hang, the while
You led her to the carriage.

Wilt. Do you know

Who was the lady?

Green. Daughter to the Duke
Of Gaveston.

Wilt. Yes; and I an humble man!

Green. You are not an humble man—that is—I am right!—
And stand to what I say—a man that owns
A noble soul is not an humble man,
In the poor sense wherein the sapient world
Mouths out the trite and questionable phrase!

Wilt. Who are you, sir?—Forgive me!—I'm content
To know you by your thoughts.

Green. Whereto I'll add
 My deeds in time, with every adjunct else !
 Hie to the Duke's ! He owes thee benefit ;
 And welcome will he give thee as a friend,
 Though dull to what's to come, as dawn to day
 When the sun's up and glow is turn'd to fire !
 His daughter pines for sight of him again,
 Whom the first sight commended so, all else
 To vision is a blank ! I say again
 Thou art no humble man ! Revolve my words
 With boldest spirit.—Dare, and you shall win !
 My counsel needing, or my help, this scrawl
 Will prove your guide, although a homely one.
 'Tire never yet was flesh and blood, no more
 Than mind and heart ! The man is still the man ! [Goes out.]

Wilt. As fanning wind will bring to blaze again
 The fire we thought was out, but only smoulder'd ;
 So, at his word, my only smother'd hopes
 Revive, when, doting, I believed them dead.
 Here Sherbrooke comes—indeed my hearty friend,
 But, for my humour, all too light a one.

Enter SHERBROOKE.

Sher. So, Master Secretary, health to you !
 If health you wish—for he's a fool who serves
 A man against his humour—the right road
 To make an enemy ! Each man has his bliss
 According to his nature. One will mope ;
 A squadron could not drag him to a feast !
 Leave him, good soul, alone, with knees to chin,
 Feet on the fender, sitting all a-heap
 Over the embers winking in the grate !
 He's happy !—With the spleen another man
 Is smitten—champions it as cavalier
 His lady-love ! “Have at you, sir !” would you come
 Betwixt him and his humour. Do you see
 That scowl ?—It is his mistress' favour which
 He wears with thin and bitter curling lip,
 All the year round, spite of the laughing sun.
 And why not, sir ? He is a happy man !—
 As happy as he can be !—Let him be !
 And there are men, saving your reverence,
 Who, with the thorax sound as a new drum,
 Waste with the melting rheum—would you believe them ?
 With trunks like culverins, and limbs of brawn,
 They shake with rigors at a thorough air !
 No month but brings its proper malady,
 Of which they're sure to die !—yet do they live,
 And sleep, and wake, and talk, and eat, and drink,
 Until perhaps some nostrum makes an end !—
 Yet are they happy, sir, in their own way.

Wilt. These are anomalies 'mongst men.

Sher. Not so :

The world's made up of such ! Few wisely live.

The wise man, sir, is the anomaly !

Wilt. You're in the mood contemplative to-day.

Sher. I am—I am about to seek a wife.

Why do you start ?—I do not say to *take* one.

Wilt. About to wed ?

Sher. My father wills it so.

But fathers do not settle marriage brawls :

A pity, then, they settle marriages.

Better their children. Men complain the less,

When, for their cares, they have themselves to thank.

Wilt. And may I know the lady ?

Sher. You have met her.

Wilt. Met her !—

Sher. Let's see. *The time was evening. 'Twas*

A lone sequester'd spot.—Couldn't I write

A deep romance ?—A fear-bewilder'd sire

And shrieking damsel, by a lawless band

Beset.—A situation !—Who comes in ?

The hero of my story—or the book

Is matter for the fire ! *So in he comes !*

Alone ? Of course alone—most hero-like !

One against five !—Twenty were few as five,—

No hero ever takes account of odds !

Is he o'erpower'd ? Not if the scribe has thews.

His blows fell two, his eyes flash down the rest ;

Beauty and Age—weak guardian of such store—

Are rescued in the very nick of time !

Fraud its inglorious field inglorious flies,

And Age is free to hobble. Not so Beauty ;

For Beauty's soft of heart and frail of limb,

And like to swoon in an extremity ;

Which if the author sees not, he hath got

A cataract, and couch his eyes for him

With his own pen !—I am not such a one.

When I attempt a book, I write a book !

The lady needs support,—who yields it her ?

The hero 'fore the king, were the king by !

Upon the hero leans the heroine !

At first half-willingly—more willingly

Anon,—anon with all her heart and soul,—

And so, and so, and so, is borne away !

You'll read my work and give it a good name ?

Why, what's the matter, man ? You're dumb and pale.

Heavens ! if the first step overpowers you so,

How will you mount my climax as it towers ?

Wilton !

Wilt. My lord ?

Sher. My friend !—I brook not lord !

Or call me “ Sherbrooke ”—that's the friendly mode.

What gaze you at in vacancy ? A phantom ?

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Wilton !

Wilt. My lord ?

Sher. My friend !—I brook not lord !

Or call me "Sherbrooke"—that's the friendly mode.

What gaze you at in vacancy ? A phantom ?

Wilton, it is a phantom that you see.
If aught that gives you pain—I would not wed
The Lady Laura Gaveston!

Wilt. What is she
To me?

Sher. Nothing—if not the self-same thing
You are to her!—Wilton, she has lost her heart,
And you have got it.

Wilt. Sherbrooke——

Sher. That's the word!
Shake hands, man! Listen! At the play last night
I sat with her. She spoke a library,
If "yea" and "nay" make volumes. Only once
The scene attracted her. *The heroine*
Was rescued by her lover. Had you heard
The sighs with which she follow'd, step by step,
The progress of the touching incident!—
My book shall beat it, though!—If you feel, speak!
Or is it that you feel too much to speak?
Do you note me, Wilton? All the rest of the time
Her eyes kept traversing the tiers, as though
In quest of one they sought but could not find;
For ne'er they fix'd, save when there oped a door,
And then they turn'd away to range again!
The wish'd one came not in!—a circumstance
Of tender implication to dilate on.
I'll turn it to account!—My book is writ!—
And at the close, when on the vestibule
We hung awhile to wait her hinder'd coach,
Jove! how she scann'd the beaux!—Some management
To make that pass with prudes, who read aloud—
And when the steps at last gave note to mount,
How with a sigh she went all listless in,
Scarce giving me Good night!

Wilt. How know you whom
She look'd for—if she look'd for any one?

Sher. By this and this. First, her absorption at
That critical and memory-stirring scene,
The counterpart of one which you and she
Enacted once with marvellous effect—
Methinks a document!—In the next place,
The potency of certain words as plain
As "Wilton Brown" no kin at all to famed
Abracadabra!—to enchain her ear
And make the blood with ebb and flow enact
The tide upon the haven of her cheek,
And hold her lips disparted like to those
Who stint their breath with thrilling of a tale;
As with her father I discuss'd a point
Touching the argument, whereon I mean
To take my stand 'mongst literary men!—
And, add to this, as proof superlative,

Her tongue is never weary of your name,
Which, once 'tis broach'd, she more and more repeats,
Like strain that grows on us the more 'tis sung!

Wilton, the Lady Laura loves you, man!

Wilt. Sherbrooke, remember I'm an humble man!

Sher. You are not an humble man!

Wilt. Again! How's this?

I am bewilder'd—

Sher. Love is not a plain,
But an entangling maze.

Wilt. I do not speak
Of love! You say I am no humble man?

Sher. And say't again.

Wilt. Your father's secretary!

Sher. And what am I that am my father's son?
Intrinsically humbler far than you.

Wilton, think boldly of yourself!

Wilt. Again!

Look here—As now you speak, so spoke the man
Who gave me this.

[*Showing a paper.*]

Sher. Let's see it!—"Colonel Green—
"At the Green Dragon"—challenge for St. George!
And you, an humble man!

Wilt. What man is he
Who gave me that?

Sher. [*Returning the paper.*] An honourable one;
Albeit he draws not sword when he beholds
A lady leagur'd on the king's highway.

Wilt. Is he of the craft?

Sher. There, breathe at ease, my friend,
He is not. Wilton, sound men drive that trade.
Don't wonder!—When a kingdom's upside down,
What man can say he is to-day himself
As he was yesterday? The battle's chance
Brings change of pockets—light for heavy ones;
Lank purses; or, for old ones, but their room;
New masters to old mansions, and so forth!—
I do not justify, I but excuse.

There is at times a conscience in offence,
For which the best abate the penalty.
But to my Dulcinea and her knight!
My father wills I go and woo the fair.
I go and woo, but you must come and win!

Wilt. What! Go along with you? No!—not a step,
When Honour forbids me, not!

Sher. Forbid the prude
To waste her breath until she sees the strait.

Wilt. To 'scape the strait 'twere best to shun it.

Sher. So,
The navigator never had gone through!
Wilton, you'll helm it, spite of shoal and rock,
And laugh beyond in the bright open sea!

I'll have you come with me!—Nay, scowl away!
 What! jealousy!—nip friendship, will you?—but
 You shall not, by this honest arm and hand!
 Come on!

Wilt. Nay, Sherbrooke—

Sher. Nay, come on!—Come on!

[*Goes out, forcing WILTON with him.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in the DUKE OF GAVESTON's house.*

Enter the DUKE.

Duke. How changed my daughter is!—I know her not
 Since our adventure on the king's highway.
 Or love has turn'd her wits for her, or fright.
 The staid recluse of yesterday, to-day
 Is lady of the crowd! She now frequents
 Assemblies—plays—all haunts of throng'd resort.
 What draws her forth so much? I can't surmise!
 But from herself the knowledge of the cause
 Of such a metamorphosis can come.
 For quiet, restlessness!—from books to sights!
 I'll tax her home upon it. She's obedient;
 Yet, once her purpose fix'd, is hard to move.
 Suitor she never brook'd!—Men's merits, still
 Has thought, should ever 'bove their stations mount.
 I had a fear—but no!—But once they met—
 The heart forgets, when cease the eyes to prompt.
 See where she thoughtful moves with eyes on ground!
 Another time—when she's in lighter mood.
 Her heart, upon its guard, might foil me now. [*Goes out.*]

Enter LADY LAURA.

Lady Lau. Where does he hide, while gallants, not his tithe
 In manly bearing, beauty, and desert,
 Vie for the lead, and with comparisons
 Set all the world at odds?—Let him appear
 Among them, all will shrink, at once, to one!
 The world will be one eye, one ear, one tongue,
 Awarding him the palm, past all compare!
 Or would it slight his merits for his rank?
 What of his rank?—Is't his disparagement
 That Fortune's blind?—Let Fortune take the blame—
 Or rather men, who laud, where she prefers,
 Even while they know she sees not what she does!
 Why, let them like idolaters bow down
 Before the works of their own hands!—Love bends

At Heaven's command alone—informing Love!
 Honest and clear of sight, whose piercing eye
 Vies with the lapidary's—knows the gem,
 Whate'er the setting! Strange that I, a maid,
 Who held her single state so sovereignly,
 No suitor ever twice drew near to woo,
 Should now regard it as a barren sway,
 Dominion of some far and desert isle,
 Which he who owns it gladly would exchange
 For slavery in some blest continent!
 Love, if I slighted thee, thou'rt well revenged;
 I'm all thy subject now; but for my gains
 Have nought, except my servitude, to boast;
 Denied exchange of speech or sight with him
 Who made me doff defiance of thy rule!

Enter EMMELINE.

Emme. Lord Sherbrooke, madam, and a friend—

Lady Lau. A friend?

What! has his friend no name?—No lofty one,
 Or he'd be sure to give it!—Show him in.
 Stay! Do you know the gentleman that comes
 Along with him?

Emme. Not, as I think, my lady.
 His back was towards me, but I dare be sworn
 He has a noble presence.

Lady Lau. To be sure!
 He comes in noble company. The sun
 Makes vapours that are near him turn to gold!
 Go!—[EMMELINE goes out.] I am sick of you and all the
 world!—

And all the world!—I would the jest were o'er!
 The poor—poor jest, that so misplaces things,
 We know not what we look at! Everywhere,
 Except in human nature, qualities
 Determine uses. No one sets to build
 A garden-wall to train a sloe or crab,
 Or rears a thistle in a hothouse bed!
 Well, well! if essences, in other things,
 Keep rule, 'tis fit perhaps they jumble men.
 I'm sick of life! 'Tis one against the million,
 So let the million have its way!—It will!
 Lord weds with lady.—Why?—Because a lord!
 A common match would find a better reason!
 Yet no; 'tis rank all through—nothing but rank!
 Craft weds with craft—profession with profession
 Weddings for clothes! From top to bottom all's
 At odds with reason! Human life is ravell'd,
 And love itself can't make the thread run clear.
 The work that only frets 'twere best give o'er;
 Only don't help to make the puzzle worse!
 Let the world be! It is too old to mend;

What 'tis, it was, and will be to the end!

[EMMELINE enters, conducting WILTON and SHERBROOKE, and retires.]

Sher. Madam, I take leave to present myself,
And, with myself, my friend.

Lady Lau. Your friend and you,
My lord, are welcome in all courtesy.

Sher. [*Aside to WILTON.*] A welcome for a lover! Mark
you that?

An answer, too, before the question's put!
She never raised her eyes—That's hope! They say
A maid in love still goes with downcast looks.
But she may lock her vision in her heart;
And, if she does, I'll stake my coronet
You're there along with it.

Wilt. [*Uneasily.*] Accost her, Sherbrooke!

Sher. And if I do, what shall I say to her?
That 'tis a fair day?—that 'tis very warm?
Or very cool?—Or that I hope she's well,
And hope his Grace, her father, is the same?
That the new fashions are come out, and belles,
To please their beaux, now meet them with sour looks?
That beaux, to wive, come wooing for their friends?
That, nowadays, things find their proper way
By going contrary?—a paradox!
Or that the world is in its childhood yet,
And hopes to come to manhood—if it lives?
Or what? Come, Wilton, you take up the word,
And help a man that can't get through his task!
Speak to her, Wilton—Wish her a good morning!
Say anything to her.

Lady Lau. A fine day, my lord!
The tables turn when ladies must speak first.

[*Aside.*]

Sher. Madam, the day is very fine indeed;
At least, I think so. But what thinks my friend?—
For he is a philosopher, and knows
Fine weather is the kind that's wanted most.
A calm is fine—the sailor wants a breeze:
Sunshine is fine—the farmer wants a cloud:
One looks for frost, another looks for snow,
Another looks for rain—though none for sleet!
Thus, uses make the excellence of things;
At least, I think so, madam. What thinks Wilton?

Lady Lau. Wilton!

Wilt. Nay, Sherbrooke.

Sher. I will have you speak!
Madam, my friend is very weatherwise.
You call it a fine day, and so do I;
But come, what think you, Wilton?

Lady Lau. It is he!
Oh, sir, I'm glad to see you!—very glad!
Though somewhat too confused to show it you.

Because—because—I saw you not at once—
 And—find you standing—and his lordship too—
 Pray you excuse a moping, absent girl,
 And let her make amends—and—Pray take chairs!

Sher. [*Aside to WILTON.*] I might have dropp'd, you see, if
 not for you.

Now will I court her to your very face!
 Fair Lady Laura Gaveston!

Lady Lau. [*Coldly.*] Well, my lord?

Sher. My friend suspects the weather.

Wilt. [*Aside to SHERBROOKE.*] Nay!

Sher. You do.

He thinks, though now so fine, there's chance of hail;
 For it is April, as you know—a month
 When here will be a shower, and sunshine there;
 So one goes dry, another dripping wet.
 The sky's a puzzle; but there are stranger things!
 You know my errand, Lady Laura; still
 I tell it you to show I know it too;
 And, for your answer, *that*, I well foresee!
 But would not balk your bright lips of their right
 To speak, themselves, the will of her they serve.
 My father hither sends his hopeful son—
 Although in hopeless mood—to seek a wife.
 I say, *in hopeless mood*; for bonds, you know,
 Although they be of silk, are things that bind;
 And, to be plain, I love my liberty!
 I'll make but a poor husband at the best;
 But, if you will, I'll make the best I can.
 I court you, lady, for my father's sake,
 In the first place—a son can say no less;
 In the next place, I court you for your own:
 A lover, I presume, can say no more.
 Now, as I know brief wooing prospers best,
 One way or t'other bringing to an end
 What else had cost much time, were better saved;
 My courtship, promptly, as you see, begun,
 I bring as promptly to a graceful close.
 But as 'tis fit my merits you should know—
 The proper ground of failure or success—
 And as wise men speak little of themselves,
 But trust, in these regards, to others' tongues;
 The blanks which I have left—and not a few—
 I leave my friend in kindness to fill up!

Wilton, I'll wait you in the ante-room.

Wilt. [*Rising.*] Sherbrooke—

Sher. [*Pushing him down again.*] Nay, take your seat again.
 For shame!

What! Frighted of a lady's company?

Or, madam, is the gentleman to stay

At my request—or do you wish him gone?

Lady Lau. The gentleman will stay—at my request!

Sher. [*Aside to WILTON.*] Wilton, what think you of the weather now?

Madam, I dare be bound he'll do your will,
Though 'twere not back'd by mine—I take my leave;
And with the more content, because I know—
And here I speak the bare and steadfast truth—
I leave with you the man—I boast my friend. [*Goes out.*]

Lady Lau. Sir, you will deem me bold to wish you stay;
Yet, sooth, the blame is yours. When creditors
Are modest, and hold off, the debtor's shamed
That comes not forth—if not to pay his debt.
At least to grace it with acknowledgment!

Wilt. You owe me nothing, lady.

Lady Lau. Nothing!—No!—
And weighs my life, sir, nothing in your eyes?
Although perhaps a trifle in my own!

Wilt. Your life!—O, lady!—

Lady Lau. Well, sir?—Well?—Say on!
Is't nothing?—Yet my gratitude's a heap;
But that, perhaps, is nothing!

Wilt. Were't deserved,
So much—save one thing—I could wish no more!

Lady Lau. I will believe you; yet, could almost doubt;
For let me ask why what you valued so
You took no pains to learn, if render'd you?—
Don't speak!—I know!—desert that's true holds back!
Ere challenge its reward, would let it go!
Yet, in my own defence I must be frank,
And tell you I have wish'd to see you, sir;
Nor once, but oft; nor much, but earnestly,
To tell you all I feel I owe you, sir;
And still, though I defended you just now,
Charging your absence to the proper cause,
Yet must you bear some blame—for though you had
Your feelings, sir, we had our feelings too,
For which 'twere not unjust to credit us;
Which crediting, 'twere hardly generous
To grieve with needless pain!—our name—abode
My father gave you—so methinks did I.
They were not idly given, but for a purpose;
They were not coldly given, but heartily;
They meant an invitation—It is true
'Twas not accepted by your lips, and yet
I thought your looks gave token of as much.
If I thought wrong, I grieve for my mistake—
I would not think you never meant to come!

Wilt. 'Twas true!

Lady Lau. 'Twas strange!—To risk your life for us,
Yet grudge a step to see—that we were well.

Wilt. I heard that you were well—I knew you were.

Lady Lau. And that contented you. Sir, I have friends
I know are well, yet I would see them too.

But then, they are dear friends—you are very right.

'Twere almost bold to say we are acquaintance;

Yet, though you think me forward, I shall say

We were not losers, did you rate us more.

Wilt. More?—O much more!—More than I dare to name!

Lady Lau. [*Aside.*] I could believe the wish that's in my breast

Is throbbing now in his—I am beloved!

Sir, you say nothing, or you say too much—

I mean too much for faith.—More than acquaintance—

Would be a friend—much more were—more than that—

O lips, be mute—when looks can talk so well!

The more his tongue refrains, the more he speaks!

Wilt. O, were I sure—

Lady Lau. Of what?

Wilt. That I could claim

A royal stock!

Lady Lau. What then?—Be frank!—What then?

Wilt. Why then I might to lady high as you
Proffer my heart.

Lady Lau. You then would condescend!

And, think you, none can condescend but you?

Wouldst like me—for a friend?

Wilt. No!

Lady Lau. No?

Wilt. A friend

Lies near the heart; but then there is the core,
That looks for something else.

Lady Lau. Which you have found!

No?

Wilt. Yes!

Lady Lau. A mistress?

Wilt. Yes!

Lady Lau. Where does she bide?

Wilt. Where does she bide! O Honour, is it right
To take advantage of the love for us

That would undo itself—descend for us

From state—make partnership with namelessness—

Convert high veneration into scorn—

Quit the bright pageant of emblazon'd life,

To play a poor part in the daily crowd?

Lady Lau. Nothing!—All nothing!

Wilt. Cast itself away—

Give all—gain naught—unless abasement's gain—

Naught but a heart, which any one could give?

Lady Lau. No!—only one—worth all that ever beat,
Cheap purchased with her own!

Wilt. [*Aside.*] O, generous maid!

And shall I take thy sterling gold for dross?

I must, or I must fly! Lady, farewell!

Lady Lau. Stay! You have stopp'd too long to go so
soon!

Was there not something to be said? A word
About your friend? Well, sir; sit down and say it.

Wilt. My friend is noble.

Lady Lau. Ay! He is noble, is he?
Has he a heart?

Wilt. A brave, and warm one, too!
A man more modest than he loves to show.

Lady Lau. Sir, let him show the most he may, I'll find
The man will prove him very braggart there,—

A man to love whom is to boast one's self,
So is he lord of all true nobleness!

A man who rescued once a lady's life;

Who, for the chance of such salvation only,

Would risk that life again 'gainst twice the odds!

Why do you hang your head? Desert for shame!

Assert yourself, erect your brow, and cast

A thousand round you down, that only tower,

Because you please to droop! O doubtful pass

To come to!—for a maiden unenforced

To tell her love!—What can be urged for her?

What can she urge herself?—Why this, that Heaven

Inform'd her; so she knew its handiwork,

And worshipp'd Heaven in it!—Almost, and more

Than once, you've said you loved me, but stopp'd short!

I hold a virtue higher than a grace,

So prefer honesty to bashfulness—

As, by this time, perhaps, you more than guess:

Then, where you halted, will I e'en go on,

And tell you—yet why need I?—all is said

But the plain downright word, which, if I speak,

I shall not make you wise a tittle more;

Yet 'tis *the word*, and I will out with it—

You love me, Wilton, and 'tis love for love!

Why, Wilton, where's your heart?

Wilt. Here at your feet!

Lady Lau. Then 'tis a contract.

Wilt. Yes.

Lady Lau. How long to last?

Wilt. For life.

Lady Lau. No less a term!—Were't but a jot
Shorter than that, I'd have the compact torn

And scatter'd to the winds! For life?

Wilt. For life!

[*The DUKE OF GAVESTON enters.*]

Lady Lau. Then, Wilton, I am yours. But mark me, yet;
My father cannot wed me 'gainst my will—

Against my father's will I'll never wed—

If I wed ever, Wilton, 'tis with you!

Duke. What means this, daughter?

Lady Lau. Did you overhear?

Duke. I did! For shame!

Lady Lau. Nay, father, say for shame
When I recall that, which you overheard!

What I'll repeat, nor pay, nor owe, a blush!
 You are a duke—I am your grace's child.
 We both are debtors to this gentleman
 To an amount that's something near the worth
 Of both our lives!—You oft have mention'd him
 With gratitude—and, what you spoke, I felt,
 And call'd to mind the time when heroes wore
 The trophies that they won, though emperors';
 And wish'd—ay did I, from my heart's deep core—
 Such times were now for him! Up to him, father!
 Give him the generous hand. If fault there is,
 The penalty be mine—o'erleap the gap
 Rank sets between you—reverence the thing
 You owe your title to—whereby alone
 The ancestor that sent it down to you
 Won it!—Desert!—The stamp were, else, a brand!

Duke. I own myself your grateful debtor, sir,
 And what I owe you, sir, I would repay;
 And pray you take my hand as warranty,
 Which, as I reckon'd you a man of honour,
 I think you know the proper limits of,
 And, knowing, will respect them.—Sir, your leave
 To hold some brief communion with my child,
 As what has pass'd behoves her to review!

Lady Lau. Wilton, 'twas all review'd before it pass'd.
 Father, I utter it with reverence
 To you!—It was no idle passing thought—
 A seedling just appearing above ground,
 A foot could mock of growth and sweep away;
 But a deep, fibrous, and abounding root,
 Which, tearing up, you tear up all the ground,
 And that is—all my heart!—With this, farewell!
 What fruit the tree may bear but time can tell!

[*They go out severally.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—LORD BYERDALE'S *Study*.

Enter LORD SHERBROOKE and WILTON.

Sher. A maid of mettle, Wilton!—a warm heart,
 And honest too—too noble in her wish,
 To stint her tongue. She does not mew her love,
 As thus: *A well-deserving gentleman,*
She'd fain believe. Deny it, she would swear to't;
 She would!—*sufficient comely*—all the while
 She thinks him paragon. *A man, no doubt,*
A lady might affect!—while she is smit
 Beyond all doubt!—*A very proper stature;*

Sher. [*Aside to WILTON.*] Wilton, what think you of the weather now?

Madam, I dare be bound he'll do your will,
Though 'twere not back'd by mine—I take my leave;
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Ere challenge its reward, would let it go!
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She'd fain believe. Deny it, she would swear to't;
 She would!—*sufficient comely*—all the while
 She thinks him paragon. *A man, no doubt,*
A lady might affect!—while she is smit
 Beyond all doubt!—*A very proper stature;*

What some would call a straight and well-shaped man !

Companion e'en for him of Belvidere !

One whom a maiden might for husband take !

When she has married him the hundredth time

That morning, conning o'er the ceremony,

And, louder than the clerk gives out the psalm,

Chanting *obey* !—A well-conducted maid !

Spring on her lips—a very backward Spring !

And in her heart Midsummer !—Out upon it !

The love, that knows 'tis justified, is wrong

To hang its head, and droop its lids and make

Its lips a jailer's porch that opes by halves,

In constant watch of whom it may let out—

Sure token that delinquents bide within !

'Tis even as I say. My eager sire

Has got his answer. She will none of me ;

Nor stops she there, but all the truth avows.

Her heart is pledged to you !—She will be wife

To none, but Wilton Brown.

Wilt. Declared she that ?

Sher. Yes ; soon as urged thereon,

From something stronger than a hint, the Duke

In converse with my father dropp'd.

Wilt. And gave

The Duke no promise to enforce your suit ?

Sher. My father's suit, you mean ! None, Wilton ; but

Excused himself on fair and valid grounds—

A pledge unto a dying mother given

Ne'er to coerce her child's affections.

Wilt. How

Brooks my good lord your father, the o'erturn

Of what he plann'd with so much care, and thought

Beyond mischance assured ?

Sher. I fear to speak,

When what I ought to speak lacks reverence,

And to a name revered ! Content thee, Wilton.

Bethink thee of a heart o'erfraught with hate,

Revenge, aught else in passion's murky list,

And guess how brooks my father his balk'd wish !

He will be here anon !—Look to the Duke !

You may befriend him, and I know you would,

Though now the let that keeps you from your hopes !

Spin volumes out of hints—and, Wilton, mind,

Inquires my father how I bear myself

On this reverse, you tell him I am sped—

Gone in the dumps—in doubt to hang or drown ;

That horrid things I mumble to myself,

Biting my nails—portent of direst things ;

That I am clean distraught, and measure rather

For a strait jacket than a coat and vest !

A man, in brief, whose wits are out o' sorts ;

And so it is !—for is it not enough

To drive one mad, when one's content, with frets
 To try and make him more content? I hate
 A man to fill my cup till it runs o'er!
 Wilton, farewell!—Report me, if you love me,
 Not what I am, but what I should be.—Mind,
 Keep eye on the well-being of the Duke! [Goes out.]

Wilt. There's danger toward the Duke. I do not blame
 His slight of me!—Did I not slight myself?
 Rebuke my love?—forbid my hopes to look
 For entertainment at their master's hands?
 Owe the Duke grudge? I bear ill-will to none;
 My heart is all astonishment and love.
 The Earl!—My task. [Sits down.] Look to the Duke? I'll
 look
 To my own honour—then is all assured!

Enter LORD BYERDALE.

Lord Byer. Yes, I shall crush him there, where he will
 break—
 Crumble to dust—in his pride! The match was made—
 Conditions, quick as I propounded them,
 Accorded! Nothing wanting but consent,
 There where consent was duty! There!—upon
 The very threshold of completion—there
 We stop and all's undone! She shall accept,
 In lieu of one who claims a noble stock,
 A mate without a name!—a spurious graft,
 For a fair scion!—for a boast, a blush!
 And there he sits, at hand! His grace the Duke
 Is, in a net of his own weaving, caught;
 Complots with noted traitors, whose designs
 We yet but guess at—to whose haunts, to-night
 I'll have him dogg'd, and, thence as he returns,
 Arrested and committed to the Tower.
 Thus shall I strike one blow, but feather-light
 To one that is to come. My instrument!

[Looking at WILTON.]

I have borne him hard! I loathe him for the blood
 I more than guess he shares with me! Too near
 He neighbours with the title and estates
 My brothers' timely deaths without attain
 Have handed down to me. Conjecture, busy
 While yet a cast remains for chance to throw,
 Conjures up visions full of claims to come,
 On rights usurp'd, of which the wearer stripp'd,
 Is left as beggar bare! Not trustfully
 Men, wont to scowl, look sweet; yet show the wind,
 That turns foul weather all at once to fair,
 The wonder's gone. A reason will suffice.
 Wilton, good morning!

Wilt. "Wilton!" When before
 'Twas ever Mr. Brown!

Lord Byer. Wilton—

Wilt. Again!

Lord Byer. The soundest tree is still of slowest growth :
 Poplars shoot up to towers, while oaks are twigs.
 So loves and friendships vary just as trees ;
 The quickest form'd are scarce the most robust.
 I am not one who gives his heart away
 Upon a fit of liking. I take time ;
 Time is the test of truth. 'Tis many a day
 Since we knew one another—all which time
 I have thought much—felt much—but little said ;
 And e'en that little churlishly enough—
 Morosely, may be.—What, though, if I say
 It went against the grain? It did so, Wilton.
 I oft have chid myself for slighting thee—
 Tax'd myself roundly—but my after-thought
 Has ta'en my part ; for who should nourish love
 While chance remains of sudden withering
 From some unknown, too late reveal'd defect ?
 'Thus have I kept aloof, but with the aim
 To know the thing, I wish'd to draw more near,
 That, once embracing it, the lock might last !
 I know thee now, and henceforth we are friends !

Wilt. My lord !—

Lord Byer. Enough ! I guess what thou wouldst say ;
 I know thy modest nature. Be assured
 Thou canst not teach me, there ;—yet, it may be
 This seeming strange transition genders doubt.

Wilt. My lord !—

Lord Byer. I know you do not doubt me. Men,
 Single themselves, are always large of trust.
 I own I stand in need of some ; but you
 Can give, and have to spare. You are a free,
 A most deserving, more foregoing man.
 Have I not seen your patience ? Has it fail'd,
 And has it not been tried ? Ay, has it, Wilton !
 Ay, to my shame, I would say, knew I not
 My heart, and the fair end it had in view.
 The end, at times, transforms the means, that what
 We pass'd in hate, our love looks back upon !
 Wilton, you ought to rise !—You have the worth ;
 The palm should come, and shall !

Wilt. Alas !—

Lord Byer. I say
 I know your modesty—and modesty
 Is that rare quality men most applaud
 But nourish least, because 'tis not its art
 To enrich itself. The wealthy and the high
 Are the world's idols. Wilton, you must rise,
 And then, have modesty, or have it not,
 You will be hugg'd ! You have the merit, sir,
 But not the front ; and, better have the front

If you would make your way. There's not a week
In the year but mere Pretension plays and wins,
And Merit looking on, that knows the game,
But doubts to take the cards! Do I not know,
The very debts that men contract with you,
So far from claiming, you have ever shunn'd
The sight of those who owe them!

Wilt. Debts, my lord?

Lord Byer. Ay, debts!

Wilt. I know of none.

Lord Byer. Indeed! Why, then,
The Duke of Gaveston and his daughter do!
Moreover, as I learn, acknowledge them;
Farther, would render payment—*One*, at least.
I know the Lady Laura loves you, Wilton.

Wilt. Forbear, my lord! O speak not lightly of
A lady's love! It is her paramount
Especial jewel, over which keep guard
All things most rare in her tenacious sex;
Its radiant truth; its fragrant chastity;
Its goodness of the 'haviour of the heavens;
Its modesty—enhancement of all these—
Setting them off with veil more rare and rich
Than ever needle broider'd, or the loom!
If I were rich, my lord, as you would say,
'Twere scarce a theme for my rapt soul and me
To enter on so freely!

Lord Byer. You are worth
Her love, and have it, Wilton! Nay, she makes
No secret on't. Her father told me so;
Founded thereon rejection of my son,
Although with bitterness of gall'd pride.

Wilt. No wonder! He's a duke; and what am I?

Lord Byer. Why, Wilton, not the humble man you think!

Wilt. Again! You know the secret of my birth!

[*Rushing up to* LORD BYERDALE.]

Who were my parents!—O the loneliness
To live and feel, unknowing whence we sprung!
To bear most gratefully a heavy debt,
Enjoying boundless reverence and love,
Without a token of the benefactors
We owe it to! My lord, you are a father,—
You have a thought of what a son must feel
In plight so blank as mine! Who were my parents?—
Though they were peasants, tell me! All I want
Is but to know to whom my yearning heart
Has nature's right to cleave! That they are dead
I know.—Who were they? Tell me, that I make
Out of their memories, breathing, glowing things,
To keep with me and cherish and revere!

Lord Byer. Good Wilton—

Wilt. Nay, you have the knowledge.

Lord Byer. Yes.

Wilt. Then tell me what you know!—You would relieve
A famish'd man—my lord, I hunger more!

Lord Byer. Be patient!—Hear me!—Now is not the time;
Content you, what I know you shall be told.

Yet learn thus far:—Your veins are fraught with streams

Were running rich ere those that fill the Duke's

Were known to flow. Spare unavailing pains;

To that thou hast the power to compass, give

Your cares alone. The Lady Laura loves you;

You covet her; you shall possess her, ay,

With will of the proud Duke—if not—with *suit*!

I tell thee, Wilton, he will seek thee soon,

More heartily than he would shun thee now.

Reckon on that thou hast within thy reach,

And, as to other ventures, trust the winds!—

They'll bring them home before you look for them. [*Goes out.*]

Wilt. More light—not more content!—Better be dark

As ever.—Better not to know a part,

Than, knowing that, to have the rest withheld!

Who halts at prospect of the pinnacle

That gives him note his journey's end is nigh,

Except with fever of inquietude?

Way-gone and crippled, rather would he on,

Than lay him down and rest another night.

But I must rest, it seems, howe'er I can!

The knowledge of my birth brings knowledge else

He would withhold! Who has good news to tell

And does not tell it out?—Nay, if he stops,

It is for something that undoes the whole!

Conjecture's waste, that ends where it began!

Yet must I on again, nor better speed!

The Duke consent to mate his child with me?

How?—When?—A reason?—'Tis deception all!

He plays a part! Said not Lord Sherbrooke now

His heart was fraught with malice 'gainst the Duke,

And means he the Duke well?—He loves not me,

And does he mean me well? Tell me the Duke

Will sue to me to wed his noble child!

Oh, I would wed her!—but will wed her never,

Except with free and full consent of honour! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Green Dragon.* SIR GEORGE BARKLEY, SIR RICHARD FENWICK, SIR WILLIAM PARKYN, SIR JOHN FRIEND, HARRISON, CHARNOCK, and others, seated round a table, whereon there are papers and other implements for writing. They rise and come forward.

Sir G. Bark. Sirs, 'tis the journey's end, without the toil,
The chance, a thousand things that stop the way,

On a long road, and cause the traveller
To curse the setting out—for what's the strife?
Why, James, or William of Nassau!—Away
With one of them—'tis done!

Sir R. Fen. It was the counsel
I cleaved to all along.

Sir W. Park. And I.

The others. [*Except ARMSTRONG.*] And all.

Sir G. Bark. Which, had it been allow'd to take its course,
Our hopes had been consummate now, instead
Of things to question. 'Sdeath, sirs! men resolved
To act, should on like men, and act at once,
Not stop and gape about them!

Arm. Colonel Green—

Sir G. Bark. Who's that? I trust all here are friends!

Arm. 'Twas I
That spoke!

Sir G. Bark. And what of Colonel Green?

Arm. The plan
Was liked by all but him—I meant to say
No more.

Sir G. Bark. The plan was liked by all but him!
Who broke it to him? 'Tis for him to act,
Not plot. He does not like the covert blow!
No more do I—no more does any man.
But if one blow will save a million, strike,
And never hang debating on the mode.
The Colonel has seen service—

Arm. You say right.
He's an old soldier and a gallant one!

Sir G. Bark. Who does not know it?—Will you let me
speak,
And bide your time—or, must you speak, speak on,
But tell us something new! He is a soldier,
And, would he mutter at an ambuscade?
Or, never has he plann'd nor captain'd one?
I warrant you!—'Twere news indeed to him
To tell him war is free to stratagems;
And says *he* it is peace? Why are we here,
And others sitting in our easy chairs?
Are not our own doors, sirs, thy very last
We dare to knock at? Are we the King's men,
And sits another on our master's throne?
The fight is over! Is it?—Ay!—indeed,
While in their sheaths our rapiers restless lie!
Before a month an army's in the field,
And is it peace?

Sir R. Fen. You are warm!

Sir G. Bark. I own I am.

Sir J. Friend. We are all agreed.

Sir G. Bark. But others should be nere.
Where is the Duke of Gaveston?

Sir R. Fen. Have you broach'd
The purport of our meeting to his grace?

Sir G. Bark. No; for his grace is like a restive horse,
Given to back at starting—free enough,
If once he's made to go. Lead him by the head
A little, and he'll progress.

Sir W. Park. Hark! a step!

Sir G. Bark. See who it is!—Who is it?

Sir W. Park. 'Tis the Duke.

Enter the DUKE OF GAVESTON.

Sir G. Bark. Your grace is welcome, though the hour
rebukes

Your punctuality.

Duke of Gav. Nay, Sir George Barkley,
The most assuréd purpose must resign
The mastery to chance! My coach broke down.

Sir W. Park. His grace is full in time.

Sir G. Bark. I do not mean
To blame his grace—but a conspirator
Is one who sails in treacherous latitudes,
Where tempests give no warning, but blow up
The waves at once; where, while you look at him,
The sun goes out, and all the heaven is wrack;
And thunders bellow the next minute only,
To that when scarce the ripple at the bow
Whisper'd the vessel's course. So I mistrust,
Yet cause see none to fear. Possess the Duke
Of what we have debated and resolved.

[*The DUKE retires with SIR W. PARKYN.*

Sir J. Friend. [*Aside to SIR G. BARKLEY.*] His grace is
potent; what if he demur?

Sir G. Bark. [*Aside to SIR J. FRIEND.*] He will demur!—
observe his grace's looks!

He likes not foreign aid!—That frets the grain.

He will not sail with us if he can help;

But he's aboard and we command the ship!

'Tis but "Up anchor," and we scud along!

The cloud again, but darker!

Duke of Gav. [*Coming forward.*] Never, sirs!

'Gainst foreign aid I enter, come what may,

My protest. If we cannot right ourselves,

We'll bear our wrongs, and let our brothers have

The day, howe'er unjustly, rather than

Commit ourselves and them into the hands

Of the natural enemy!—and as for him

Who has usurp'd the throne, as we aver,

Why, let him keep it, if to strike him thence

Needs the assassin's arm! The noblest cause

Were damn'd to seek success by means so foul!

The field, sirs, if you will!—I am with you there;

But not in a conspiracy like this,

Befitting men who make a trade of blood—
Abhorr'd of those who hire them!

Sir G. Bark. You are quick
In making up your mind to draw your stakes!
You are in the game, and must abide the deal.

Duke of Gav. Must, sir!

Sir G. Bark. Plain speech fits best, in grave affairs!
Sirs, we are like to mariners escaped
A founder'd ship, in open boat at sea;
The will of the majority is law,
He who demurs to which goes overboard!
Here are our measures stated; whereunto
Want but our signatures as evidence
For one and all, that all committed stand!
Come; while this solemn act proceeds, unsheath. [*They draw.*
His grace, in point of right, precedence takes.

Duke of Gav. I will not sign, sirs, neither draw my sword.

Sir G. Bark. [*Grasping the DUKE's wrist.*] Nay, my lord
Duke, you must.

Col. Green. [*Entering.*] Good even, sirs!
A wonted guest may come unbidden.

Sir G. Bark. Green!
Who let you in?

Col. Green. Who durst not keep me out.
And if he could, what is the use of doors
When councils are not close?—You talk too much,
Good Sir George Barkley! Since I thwarted you
A month ago in these same measures, which,
To carry through, you now convene your friends,
You have boasted fifty times, by this and that,
To divers hearers, and in divers haunts,
You'd bring your plans to bear; in which, I grieve,
Others, that should know better, side with you.
But not with you my business.

Sir G. Bark. Whom besides?

Col. Green. The Duke of Gaveston. But that he were here,
I had not come. He is refractory;
I said he would be so, and I am glad;
For prophets like to see their words come true.
Good Sir George Barkley!—

Sir G. Bark. Sir?

Col. Green. You make too free
With his grace's sleeve! So please you, let it go.

Sir G. Bark. Who abets treachery?

Sir J. Friend and others. None here!

Col. Green. Well said,
Assassination! Well said, the allies
Of the common enemy!—the gentlemen
Who plan when William next should hunt the stag—
A masquerade, wherein the foreign bravo
Should don the British sportsman's jovial gear,
Who gives the game a chance!—who undertake

To give kind welcome to a force from France—
 Suffer her skipping sons to flourish here
 Weapons that never left their scabbards yet,
 Except with threat against a British throat!
 Who abets treachery? So!—Sir George Barkley, hear you?
 I say, once more, let go his grace's sleeve!
 I wish a word with him.

Sir G. Bark. Is't not enough
 We are gainsaid?—shall we be bearded too—
 Our weapons in our hands?

Col. Green. Beware, the first
 Who stirs to strike. Though many look one way,
 All are not of one mind. Good Sir George Barkley,
 You should know better! Men, in counting friends,
 May chance to overlook a foe or two.
 Before you call a game of swords, behoves
 You make sure of the sides. Moreover, sir,
 The wisest man counts most upon himself,
 As I, you see, have done!

*[Throws back his cloak, and shows himself provided
 with pistols, &c.]*

Beware, Sir George,
 For pistols make reports!—reports are heard!
 Triggers are quick! and, if the priming burns,
 Why then, in an old hand, is powder dust!
 I have a sword besides, that's used to odds,
 As more than one can vouch! Come, Sir George Barkley,
 Let go the Duke this minute, or the next
 A bullet's through your head!—You know I mark
 Whenever I take aim!

[SIR GEORGE BARKLEY releases the DUKE.]

That's courteous, sir!
 Your grace will please to leave my frontage clear,
 And step a pace behind me. Now, Sir George,
 A minute's parley, if you will.

Char. We treat
 You fairly; wherefore do you thwart us thus?

Col. Green. You treat me fairly! Hear you, Sir George
 Barkley—

I speak to you, sir, you! the head of those
 Who treat me fairly! Sir, you hatch'd this plot
 Without my privy! Was that fair? It
 Was wise—I should have crush'd it in the hatching!
 You warn'd me hold myself in readiness,
 With ten of those who follow me, to back you
 In the enterprise, but never once let out
 The nature on't,—Was that fair? It was prudent:
 The breath, you breathed it in, had been your last one!
 A friend—I have some—put me on my guard.
I was to learn hereafter! when I stood
 Unwittingly committed in the fact!
 And yet he tells me I am treated fairly!

And had it come to pass, sure as you hear me,
Straight to the block had I given up myself,
And dragg'd you thither with me, one and all!

Sir G. Bark. Design you to betray us?

Col. Green. No; that's truth;
But I'll defeat your plans!—That's truth again!
Your names I ne'er divulge! Your heads are safe,
For any hint that I shall give the axe!

Arm. He is a man of honour—fear him not.

Sir G. Bark. But I *do* fear him.

Col. Green. Do, and reap the fruit!
A craven spirit scared without a cause!

Sir G. Bark. We should not let him go.

Col. Green. Nay, but you should.

Sir G. Bark. Wherefore?

Col. Green. Because you must. Good even, friends!
Be what you were, when I made one among you,—
Soldiers!—I hold not compact with assassins!
Trust to yourselves!—Make not allies of foes!
For him who owns the throne, another fills,
Array the honourable, open field,
Then call me traitor if I show not there!
Pray move not from your places—We can find
The stairs without your help—which, trust me, sirs,
Were pains that scarcely would repay themselves;
And so I take my leave.—A kind good night!
[*The DUKE and COLONEL GREEN go out. The others*
draw into a knot in the back of the stage.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Kensington Palace.*

Enter COLONEL GREEN and a PAGE.

Col. Green. My business will not stay, sir! 'Tis direct
And urgent. It is done this very hour,
Or not at all. Your own discretion use;
But using it, remove all blame from me.
The council sits; and, as you say, no doubt
On grave affairs; but graver bring me hither.
So tell Lord Portland.

Page. May I crave your name?

Col. Green. No, sir; my business is my name; and that
I tell to none but him.

Page. He scarce will grant
An audience to an unknown visitor.

Col. Green. And, if I give my name, I am unknown.
What then, sir? Do you know me? No. To you
Or him, I give what name I please; but, save

My own, I shall give none, and that, so please you,
 I will not give. My business is of moment!—
 Instant in matter vital to the king:
 That, for your warrant to perform my wish.
 Yet something farther. Tell his lordship, one
 Whose life he saved, craves speech with him. The Boyne
 Will help his memory as to time and place.
 An officer dismounted in the rout,
 Who would not ask his life from swords, enow
 To give discomfort to a wavering troop:—
 His lordship saw my plight—call'd off the dogs,
 And saved the game, at bay! He'll recollect,
 Else is his memory shorter, sir, than mine;
 For I shall ne'er forget it till I die!
 Now may I trust you'll pleasure me?

Page. I shall.

[*Goes out.*]

Col. Green. No man is bound when evil counsels warp
 Those he contracted with on honest grounds.
 There's the default of combinations. Men
 Respect the compact more than they love truth.
 Keep it together when 'tis crack'd and flaw'd
 With rank defect, through folly creeping in,
 Cunning or crime; and ought to fall to pieces!
 Brand me a traitor!—say I am forsworn!—
 If I must hold with men, or lose the grasp
 Of mine own soul! Away the allegation
 That flouts the laws of man—mocks those of Heaven!
 My honour's dear content is cheaply kept
 At loss of the whole world!—Conscience is all!
 But let me not forget the leaguer'd Duke,
 Now in the toils of some close enemy—
 Belike the Earl of Byerdale.—Revenge
 For the rejection of the son! 'Twas strange
 They captured him, yet laid not hand on me.
 Herein his case I have in full set forth,
 And pleaded, as his bearing warranted,
 For Wilton's sake. No friend of mine is he!

Enter the PAGE, conducting in the KING.

Page. This is the person.

King. So!—You may withdraw.

[*PAGE retires.*]

I recollect him! though twelve years might serve
 A longer memory for plea to lose
 A trace of one beheld but once, and then
 In wrack of tempest. Yes; it is the man!
 Though by his air, more than his person known.
 He knows not me. Report, that gatherer
 Of all that comes to hand—which oft picks up
 Falsehood as truth—has pass'd another for me.
 Your business, sir?

Col. Green. See I at last the man
 To whom I owe my life?

King. You see that man.

Col. Green. And, if I do, first let me say to him
My debt, although long due, was ne'er forgot;
And though to pay it I am bankrupt, save
In gratitude, yet that has known no waste
From lapse of time; but still has grown and grown,
Till now my heart, half-bursting with its freight,
Has scarce the power to lay it down before him!

King. [*Aside.*] A man of generous nature well as brave!
Myself befriended, I befriending you!
I recollect you; though the veil which years
Casts o'er the face, they have had time to weave.
I recollect you, sir! A gallant man
Is scarce forgotten by his brother, though
At odds with him—especially when seen
In strait that proves him mettle to the core!
Such as beleaguer'd you. I am very glad
You 'scaped the further hazard of the day,
And live in health to this.

Col. Green. O, my good lord—

King. Your business, pray you?

Col. Green. If I speak of one,
You serve and reverence, by a title, less
Than that you name him by, forgive a man
Who having been the subject of a king
Who had a throne, pays him allegiance now
Without one!

King. Sir, I understand you. Spare
Excuses! Save compunction! We shall speak
Of William of Nassau. What you would say
Refers to him?

Col. Green. His safety!

King. Ay!

Col. Green. His life!

King. His life is in High Hands, sir, and to those
He trusts it!

Col. Green. Those who do not fear such hands
Are arm'd against his life.

King. Sir, every day
Is rife with rumours—every day we hear
Of plots a-hatching, ready to start up;
Yet day succeeds to day and nothing stirs
To cost a wink of sleep!—The King's at ease
Or, if it please you,—William of Nassau!

Col. Green. Your lordship will compel me say the "King,"
If for my feelings thus you tax your own;
And, yet, I should not say it.

King. Nothing say
But what you should say. What's the danger, sir,
You hint at?

Col. Green. What I know on better ground
Than simple rumour! What with my own eyes

I have seen—have heard with mine own ears—had been
A party to, but that, at the first blush,
My soul revolted at the treason!

King. Treason
To William of Nassau!

Col. Green. To mine own honour!

King. I thought, sir, 'twas the life of such a man
I saved! Go on!

Col. Green. Ere I proceed, I have
A boon to ask—nay, a condition.

King. Well!
Say a condition, 'tis accorded!—Name it.

Col. Green. Not to be importuned—far less required—
To divulge a single name!—for they are mates
I hitherto made common cause with—brothers
In honourable venture—bonded with me
By wear of sinew and by waste of blood.
If I defeat the guilt, it is enough;
I'll not betray the guilty, come what may!

King. It is enough!

Col. Green. But further yet, my lord;
If aught transpire to bring to perfect light
The plot with its contrivers, I shall stand
Aloof!—no evidence of mine be call'd
To fix the penalty on the accused—
And though it were, I should be mute, and keep
My silence steadfast to the very block.

King. I think you would!—Have all that you demand—
My honour is implugged! And now the peril?

Col. Green. Assassination!

King. That is a base pass
For your king's cause to come to!

Col. Green. On my soul
He knows it not! Did he, upon the same
Immortal, irrecoverable pledge,
If forfeited—he would denounce it, though
It cost frustration of his regal hopes!

King. [After a pause.] You are a loyal man!—What farther,
sir,
Concerning William of Nassau? Unless
You throw some farther light, he's struck before
He sees the blow.

Col. Green. To-morrow he will dine
With my Lord Romney—

King. Ay?—Behoves our William
He whisper his engagements with his friends!
Well?

Col. Green. He will be beset with twice the sum
Of his accustom'd guards.

King. That's matter, sir:
Proceed.

Col. Green. On Saturday, towards ten at night,

He is like to pass 'cross Turnham Green.

King. Indeed!

A worse than bootless journey saved perhaps,
Or taken at more charge of retinue!

Aught else?

Col. Green. If they are baffled there, he hunts;
And, on some breathing-day, they will take care
To turn out such a field that Death himself
Shall ride along with him.

King. They go to work
In earnest!

Col. Green. O, my lord! Protect your king!
Counsel him to be wary! Hedge him round
With safety thickly!—thickly, my good lord!
For your own sake—for your fair country's sake,
That loathes the secret stab—Nay for his own!
For he is brave—a thousand miles above
A foul and dastard death!—an upright prince!
As all allow—even his enemies!
Grateful to those who serve him—meaning well,
Even in the act which I and many more
Traverse and bear with blame—Although to him
I ne'er owe fealty, nor bend the knee,
Nor—

King. Stop!—you are in error all along;
Which, with your leave, I now will set to rights.
'Tis not the lord of Portland talks with you;
'Twas not the lord of Portland saved your life;
His squadrons William of Nassau awhile
In person led. He saw you, thick beset;
He heard the death or quarter proffer'd you;
The latter, point at throat, you would not ask!—
The first, were ready—like a cavalier
Whose soul was in the cause he battled for
And saw was lost—to take! He stopp'd the thrust
Saw you remount, and order'd you free way!
You say it was a debt—well; be it so!
But, if it was, 'tis amply, now, repaid;
And take acquittance full, and thanks, to boot,
From William of Nassau!

Col. Green. The king!—My life
Your highness' gift!—Then 'tis your highness' due,
And on my knee, I tender it!

King. Indeed!—
I did not look for this.

Col. Green. I know it, sire!
And, therefore, tender't the more heartily.

King. Rise, pray you!
Teach me how I am to name you.
You hesitate!—Enough!—Take your own time
And opportunity. I shall expect
To hear from you.—Nay, since you give me right—

Command you, that you, then, apprise me fully
 Touching the knowledge which I now forego!
 And now, good morning, sir. If I have found
 A subject, well!—if not—you have found a friend!

Col. Green. A king! my liege.

King. Then, sir, the better friend!

Col. Green. O, yet vouchsafe, my liege, another moment:
 One who his life imperill'd yesternight,
 Discountenancing foulest treachery,
 Was in my presence by your messenger
 Arrested, and, as truly I believe,
 Not upon public but base private grounds—
 The Duke of Gaveston.

King. Ay!—I know the Duke
 Affects another's cause; but, by my crown,
 I hold him as an open enemy,
 And bear no grudge to him.—Concerns that scroll
 The Duke?

Col. Green. [*Presenting the scroll.*] It does.

King. I shall peruse it, sir,
 And when I know the man who gave it me—
 As now do hold you bound to let me know him—
 Declare my judgment on it.

Col. Green. Yet, my liege,
 Another moment.—Deem me not a man
 Who loosely cleaves! Had I been such a one,
 I had been shaken off by slights, neglects,
 Short-comings, and offences, long ago!
 Nay, farther,—think not 'tis my personal
 Peculiar debt alone determines me
 I' the transfer of my duty; for of late,
 I have begun to see, despite my wish,
 Another good, neglected formerly,
 Incorporated with the regal weal
 In your more equal, patriotic sway.
 I say't with pain of heart, yet hearty faith,
 And, to assert it, henceforth draw my breath.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—LORD BYERDALE'S *Library*. WILTON
discovered sitting. He comes forward.

Wilt. Hope! ready promiser, unsure performer,
 Unequal architect, that builds the mole,
 Which breaks the mountain billows into spray;
 Or fabrics fragile, as the gossamer's,
 That come and vanish with the dews of morn;
 Bitter betrayer, yet sweet counsellor,
 Voucher believed, with thousand broken oaths!
 Friend false, yet, for a fair face, trusted still—

Why do I listen to thee? Joyful dream,
 That turns out, oft, on waking, blank despair,
 Why do I trust thy visions, and dream on,
 Gazing on the good I never may enjoy?
 Yet art thou blest so far—The naked wretch
 Goes clad by thee, the while—the hungry feasts!
 The woe-begone forget their tears and smile!
 The greater part of being is fill'd up
 With solace by thee, and the load, that else
 Would break the back, is borne with patience still!
 Thou art the anodyne which lulls the pang,
 That should not chide thee, though it wakes again!
 The stimulant which breaks the lethargy,
 Which, though it close on us again, thou robb'st
 Of so much being, else were swallow'd up!
 Thou art a good, although a doubtful one,
 And, wanting thee, this fitful course of life
 Were never half run through! I'll deal with thee!
 But, yet, with question; so, by thy default
 I suffer less, and, if thou keep'st thy word,
 Lose nothing of the gain thou promisest!

Enter WILLIAMS.

Will. A lady, sir, would speak with you.

Wilt. A lady?—

With me?—Conduct her in.

[*WILLIAMS goes out.*

What sympathy

Lives 'twixt my heart and hers that comes, that thus
 I am all alarms?

[*WILLIAMS re-enters, conducting in LADY LAURA veiled.*

Withdraw.

[*WILLIAMS goes out. WILTON offers a chair, which is declined.*

Will you not sit?

[*She declines again.*

Madam, your will?

Lady Lau. The fullest credit, sir,
 A gentlewoman in unwonted strait,
 Compelling her to slight allow'd forms,
 May challenge at a man of honour's hands.

Wilt. [*Aside.*] The voice is hers—her lineaments and form
 Her air betrays, which none could mock so well,
 As to deceive the eye, instructed once
 How symmetry and beauty bear themselves
 United in one costly paragon!

Lady Lau. A tardy answer speaks a doubtful suit;
 The boon we wish to grant is graced at once!
 I blush enough, believe me, at my boldness,
 To need to blush at your rebuff as well.

Wilt. [*Rushing up to her and taking her hand.*] It must
 be you!

Lady Lau. [*Throwing back her veil.*] Wilton, 'tis I!—

[*WILTON offers to kneel.*] Forbear.

Nay, keep your feet. Knee give me none, save that
Obedience bends! I know not reverence
Of shows and words!—I challenge none at all!
Why should I?—I, that poorly have upheld
My maiden state! or am I, all-forgot?
And did you woo me long?—protest your love
A thousand times ere I would lend an ear?
Sue me with sighs as thick as winter gusts,
To win a breath of faint encouragement?
Besiege each access to my chary love,
My pity, pride, trust, generosity,
Till heart of stone could not withstand the dint
Of such enforcement, and, to yield, became
A grace in most unquestion'd modesty?
Didst thou all these, or any one of these?
Or—was I cheaper than a peasant won,
That's found not, save by seeking?

Wilt. Lady—

Lady Lau. Lady!

Ay; I have borne myself most loftily!
Maintain'd my sex's rights with most high hand!
I thought I had!—If I had met you, Wilton,
In a gay ball, I should have pass'd you by
With eye withdrawn soon as it lit on you;
For face and form of man I ne'er perused,
So was I wont to pore upon the spirit
That makes the high romantic in your sex;
But when I mark'd your visage kindling up
With all that prompts what chivalry enacts,
As, single to my foes you stood opposed—
A bastion 'twixt aggression and the weak—
Comely and stately! garrison'd by proof
Of valour, truth, and generosity,
The vision, which, from girlhood e'en till then,
My soul had raised, embodied stood before me,
And all my woman's nature clung to thee!

Wilt. What mean your words? Something is wrong! What
is it?

Lady Lau. All's wrong!—A maid should be an icicle,
Yielding but drop by drop—and then with chilling
Cold to the last! Melting, not of herself,
But 'gainst her nature!—then she's worth the thawing!
Frankness in her is not a virtue, or
'Tis one that will undo her! She should go
Without a heart!—It is her poverty
To have one! Men aver they prize her for't;
But when they find she has one, and 'tis theirs,
They care for't, as for that they cast away!

Wilt. And if your heart is mine, my dearest hopes
Were with it cast away.

Lady Lau. Your dearest hopes !
They are no longer hopes !—You are sure of them !

Wilt. Madam !

Lady Lau. Ay, madam !
My Lady Laura Gaveston !—the Duke's daughter !
Tell me the truth ! Have I not play'd my part
Most poorly ? With most abject, paltry spirit ?
O, but a maid's in an extremity
That tells her love ! But do me justice, sir ;
Or hear me justify myself ! I saw you
Of humble rank, but thought your nature noble
Beyond enhancing by a thousand patents !
I saw that you affected me—you did so !
But that, what the mere name of rank had loosed
Its essence tied—your tongue.—I spoke, because
You could not speak—spoke for myself, I own,
But for myself, because I spoke for you ;
Else, never !—I had wither'd to a shroud,
And all had wonder'd how ! With but my heart
You might have staid content, as I with yours,
My hand, have left to chance ! It was not fair
To win it in a strait, without advice
Or hint ! No will of mine consulted !—“ Yea,”
Or “ Nay,” a cipher !—no more option than
A bargain bought and sold ! Yours will I be,
But how ? With all my heart ? No, Wilton !—Go
Not back for what I speak !—I will be thine—
It must be, but alas ! how fall'n in pride !
How shamed beyond endurance ! how betray'd !
How jarr'd in love—for O, I love you still !
How broken in content at prospering !—
How balk'd in all made hope of union sweet !

Wilt. How comes this ruin where I nothing see
That's flaw'd, far less gives way ?—O lady !—

Lady Lau. Peace !
Enough ! To-night we wed.

Wilt. We wed to-night !

Lady Lau. Whence all this wonder where there's nothing
new ?

Wilt. All's new to me ! All strange that you aver,—
The last most strange of all !

Lady Lau. And know you naught
Touching the Earl ?

Wilt. [*Recollecting himself.*] The Earl !

Lady Lau. You recollect !—
Your wander'd thoughts come home !

Wilt. I see it all !
Something has been transacted which you think
I have lent aidance to,—with which my wish,
You think, has gone along, or my consent !
I am clear as your unquestionable self
In each of these respects ! The Earl——

Lady Lau. Go on!—
There is the shoal that wrecks me, or, escaped,
Sees me at anchor with a freight to scorn
An argosie!—Go on!—

Wilt. What you aver
Shall come to pass, he told me should arrive.

Lady Lau. But not the means?—Wilton, if yet I doubt,
It is with yearning for the clearing up,
That brightness may be perfect—not a wreath
To flit across the welkin of my hopes,—
But sun! all sun!—But not the means?

Wilt. No!

Lady Lau. No?
I am thy wife to-night! At ten to-night
I plight thee troth for troth!

Wilt. Where?

Lady Lau. Bless thee for
That question!

Wilt. Where?

Lady Lau. Again? Nor once too oft—
O my tenacious soul, not pleased enough
With proof on proof, but grasps at more and more.
Where?—Guess!

Wilt. Thy father's house?

Lady Lau. My father's jail!

Wilt. His jail!

Lady Lau. The Tower! Nay, do not gasp; and yet
Didst thou not, Wilton, I should stint for breath,
I should not heed, though ne'er again I drew!
Forgive me! Clear thou nothing know'st! Forgive me!

[*Kneels to* WILTON.]

Wilt. Rise!

Lady Lau. To thy arms I will—my pardon seal'd!

Wilt. [*Raising her.*] O, hope outdone—reality undream'd.

Lady Lau. Listen, lest opportunity be gone.
My father on a charge of treason bides
A pris'ner in the Tower. These are times
When not men's reasons, but their passions, fill
The judgment-seat; wherefore, it oft goes hard
With innocence itself. The axe alone
Is sure of its rights, and those, and more, it gets;
And takes them sudden quick!—Ah, Wilton!—Well!—
This knows my father—this the Earl has urged:
Has plann'd evasion of, and will afford;
Upon condition that the hour which sets
My father free, shall see his child in bonds
She'll wear with all her heart—put on by thee!
Forbear! I know thy thoughts!—Speak not!—Hear mine!
It must be!—More a maiden should not say!
Yet wherefore?—Love that's not ingenuous
Does not deserve and should abjure the name!
Whate'er the motives of the subtle Earl,

Let it be, Wilton, for my father's sake!
 If not for his sake, let it be for thine!
 If that lacks cogency, for my sake, then!
 Listen—a summons at the portal!—Wilton,
 Pay me no tendance as I leave the house;
 Let me go forth as I were nobody!
 Thou'lt do my bidding?

[Knocking.]

Wilt. Yes.

Lady Lau. Thy word's my soul!
 At ten to-night, thou wedd'st me in the Tower! [Goes out.]

Wilt. With faculties more lapsed, ne'er vision left
 The rapt beholder—vanishing, while yet
 His soul was on the strain, where tension stops,
 Or snaps! Belief at once recoils, and trusts;
 Questions the senses, with their evidence
 Distinct and strong as e'er defied disproof!
 Asks “Is it so?” and answer'd to content
 Of reason, starts a doubt, and asks again,
 Without a ground save its own strange amaze!
 Give loose to joy, and welcome Fortune, though
 Her visit is unlook'd for, and she comes
 With face all bright, where scarce you hoped a smile!
 The Earl?—Why, how is this?—Why breaks he up
 The goodly company of my fair thoughts,
 That fly at his approach!

Lord Byer. [Entering.] Wilton, good news!
 I would have been the harbinger, but find
 A friend has been beforehand with me—still
 I say “Good news!” and give thee hearty joy!
 The Lady Laura weds thee, boy, to-night;
 And hence you bear her! Said I not, good Wilton,
 It should be so? And that it is so, take
 The warrant of the Duke.— [Gives a paper.]

You have his child's;

I met her as I enter'd. Sooth, she well
 Affects thee!—a fair bride, and free as fair!
 See how her father makes thee full amends
 For all the slight he show'd thee.

Wilt. [Reading.] From the Tower?

Lord Byer. Ay, Wilton. He would meddle—take a part—
 In the game arch-traitors play—The cards were struck
 From his hands, though scarce in time to save the stake,
 His life—which he must owe to thee.—You read?

Wilt. I do, my lord.

Lord Byer. He speaks his wishes plainly?

Wilt. He does.

Lord Byer. And urgently?

Wilt. And urgently.

Lord Byer. I said it should be so.

Wilt. You did—but—

Lord Byer. But!—

Do you demur? Well?—What?—Is the Duke to die?

Wilt. I would but ask—

Lord Byer. You would but ask—

Wilt. My lord!—

Lord Byer. Ask nothing when your wish is at the door!
But welcome it, lest, if you shut it out,
It ne'er may come again! I have done my best,
And brook not questioning. Are you content,
Or are you not? If not, no harm is done
To you; and, for the Duke he must abide
The issue whereto you abandon him!
Speaks the Duke plainly?

Wilt. Yes.

Lord Byer. The lady said
That you stood bound to her to do his will.
Good sooth, it cost no effort, I should think!
Why start a hindrance now?

Wilt. I started none:
I only—

Lord Byer. Only is too much—offence
My honour will not brook. You doubt the means—
I know you do.—Doubt on, and lose the end!
The actor vouches for the act, and scorns
Interpretations—which come gracelessly
From those he means to serve! I am content;
Let that suffice!—If not, why let it pass!
And on good fortune turn the thankless back.

Wilt. I am not unthankful.

Lord Byer. No? Then close at once;
And, without more ado, with what's proposed:
Do you?

Wilt. I do.

Lord Byer. Your honour to't!

Wilt. 'Tis given.

Lord Byer. Take in exchange the bridegroom's joy to-night,
Who at the altar clasps the maid he loves
In that embrace, which fathers can't unlock.
I'll write a word or two. [Sits and writes.]

Wilt. I feel as one
Who walks 'midst quicksands, and at every step
Fears to be swallow'd up. My heart misgives—
Tells me some gulf's at hand—yet must I on!

Lord Byer. This gives you entrance to the Tower, and this
Egress with whom you will. I'll wait you here.
Ten is the hour. The chaplain of the fortress
Has been bespoken, and will tie the knot
Quickly and fast. Prepare you for love's voyage;
Hence shall you hie to ship! Fair winds attend you!—

Wilt. O, yet a word, my lord—No doubt—a boon,
Touching myself alone! You said my blood
Was richly noble—tell me who I am!

Lord Byer. [After a pause.] I will, upon condition of an oath.

Wilt. Propound it.

Lord Byer. That what I divulge you'll keep
Strict from your mistress and the Duke, until
His prison walls are pass'd. It alters naught
Which ought to stand.—Thou art of noble blood—

Wilt. Am I?—I give my oath.

Lord Byer. [*Aside.*] I nothing risk!
It is a triumph which invites me now,
And longer to delay were misery.

Wilt. O speak, my lord!

Lord Byer. I see you burn to know.
Wilton, we share one blood.

Wilt. My gracious lord!

Lord Byer. I am your uncle!—

Wilt. If my duty—

Lord Byer. Nay;
I claim no duty from you! You are e'en
My eldest brother's son.

Wilt. His son, my lord!

Lord Byer. But not his heir.—There was a bar to that!

Wilt. A bar! What bar?

Lord Byer. Your mother bless'd his bed;
But not that bed, the priest—She loved and fell!
Wilton, I have kept my word!—Keep thou thy oath!

[*Goes out.*]

Wilt. Monster!—O, double malice! Hate 'gainst me!
Revenge against the Duke!—Both in the clutch
Of his most devilish craft! The Duke with life
In jeopardy—which but these nuptials save!
The terms of liberty, which, till he gains,
My lips are seal'd. No option left him, thus,
Betwixt disgrace and death! With branded brow
Espouse his trusting honourable child!
Swear in the very act of such betrayal,
To love and cherish her! Myself a monster,
Save I incur the blight of perjury!
Dilemma hideous and inextricable!
Guidance! Help! Succour! Where shall they be found?

[*Goes out.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Street.*

Enter WILTON BROWN and LORD SHERBROOKE.

Wilt. Counsel me, Sherbrooke! I am past advice
Or aidance from myself!—a man in bonds—
Imprison'd—one whose substance goes to rack
On a nefarious plea, which but his face
Would quash, and he's restrain'd from showing it!

Sher. Collect your thoughts! Be more yourself!

Wilt. I cannot!

To Lady Laura stand I pledged, to-night
To change my troth with hers before the priest!
Thy father's bondsman am I, further yet,
Until that league of love I implement;
And further still, the Duke's life hostage held,
Which, if I know him, he would forfeit sooner
Than suffer a polluted stream to mix
With the pure current of his costly blood;
Yet there debarr'd of option, by my oath
To keep my secret till his liberty
Is by his own undoing perfected.
What's to be done?

Sher. What is a man to do

That's in the grasp of stronger men than he,
But go along with them? Scruples that can't
Avail, should never chafe! What I should do,
And could, I would do; but, the power away,
The crime of the omission is away!
Our parentage is not of our own choice,
So its discredit to its framers stick,
Not us; and hang the world that makes it ours!
Sooth, though the banns had never been proclaim'd,
I had been still the goodly youth I am;
The same engaging features—shapely form—
Right gallant carriage—girth and height without
Abatement of the matter of an inch!
The same bold, merry heart, and pranksome wit;
Yea, I believe my blood had been the same,
The same my hair and skin! Tut, Wilton! men
Should answer for themselves, and live and breathe
In others' 'count by their own deeds alone!

Wilt. A friend that knew my wishes and my strait,
Might, of his own accord, effect for me
What mocks my faculty!

Sher. And if he did,

How might you thank him by-and-by? No, sir;
I live in hopes to be a god-father,
And can't forego the chance. I would enjoy,
Moreover, the bride's customary bounty—
The blushing kiss, I, else, may never get;
Besides, I wish the race to multiply!
It is a matter that concerns the state,
And I, a loyal subject, should not thwart.
Then I have thoughts, myself, of matrimony,
Although an indefinable mistrust,
And so would profit, like a thorough friend,
By your experiment. 'Sdeath! would you spoil
The chance of such a Benedict as I?

Wilt. Sherbrooke, you jest; and honour is in question!

Sher. And if it were, Wilton, I should not jest,

But set you free at thralldom of my life.
 Look you ; you blush to share my blood ! Go to !
 I would the share were double what it is !
 I would you were my brother ! Were you, and
 With like discrepancy, my thrice-bound love,
 Being the man of merit that you are,
 Had, more than even, made the faultless odds !

Wilt. The friend that soothes me tells me what I am,
 Plain as the enemy that bears me hard !
 I wear a branded name.

Sher. No name's a brand
 When Virtue is the wearer !

Wilt. I must seek
 A sterner counsellor !

Sher. Then come with me
 To Colonel Green. No question ! If there lives
 The man to help you, he's the very man.
 More could I tell you—what shall soon be known.
 Give me my way in this, then take your own !

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Green Dragon.*—COLONEL GREEN
discovered with papers.

Col. Green. Why, this is granting favours like a king !
 My case was all I stated ; and the suit
 I might, with doubt, have founded thereupon,
 His clemency has of itself inferr'd,
 And to his bounty pleaded royally !
 One deed of grace has swept all acts away—
 All penalties ; and, in their place, supplied
 Freedom and honour ; nor to me alone,
 But those I cherish closer than myself.
 One only boon I ask'd—that granted too ;
 Enlargement of the Duke, assoil'd by me.
 Thus, Wilton, from the net wherein the Earl
 Thinks he has mesh'd him, is, at once, set free !
 Why comes he not ? Sherbrooke would see him straight—
 That goodly sample of the choice and few
 Who love so heartily another's weal,
 In following it, they overlook their own.
 Steps ! it is he.

Enter WILTON.

I have expected you.

Wilt. So was I told ; and I am here.

Col. Green. At last.

I gave you invitation long before,
 Which, in the way of common courtesy,
 You might have honour'd ; gave you hint, beside,

Of knowledge which concern'd you—which, to gain,
A visit might suffice.

Wilt. I know too much !

Col. Green. Not so. You must know more.

Wilt. Time flies !

Col. Green. It does !

But trust and fortune match its utmost speed !

Wilt. The first I have, the second have to find.

Col. Green. It may be nearer than you count.

Wilt. How, sir ?

Col. Green. It may be close at hand. Heaven will send
help

When man believes to look for it is vain.

You trust in Heaven ?

Wilt. I have no other trust !

Col. Green. [*Giving a paper.*] There !

Wilt. How !—The liberation of the Duke !

Can I believe it ?

Col. Green. Can you doubt it ? Fresh !—

And from the king's own hand.

Wilt. God save the king !

Col. Green. Now, have you leisure for a word or two ?

Wilt. Twenty, if spoken quickly—for my soul

Is on the wing to thwart iniquity,

And do a righteous deed.

Col. Green. The instrument

That paper ?—How will you employ it ?

Wilt. Set

The Duke at liberty ; and, then, the spot

That blurs me laying open to the day,

Release him from his promise to the Earl,

Forego his daughter's hand, and, as I may,

Buffet the world with shamed, but manly front !

Col. Green. Fathers, young man, are hardly in their graves
When, from their children, thus, their spirits breathe !

Wilt. Knew you my father ?

Col. Green. Yes ; of him I'd speak—

Not much—of one he loved, a little more.

I chanced to be the nearest friend of both—

I mean, the heart-friend. Have you patience ?

Wilt. Ask

When you observe me fail !

Col. Green. [*Having placed chairs for himself and WILTON.*]

Your father died

In battle, fighting for the banish'd king !

His brother—

Wilt. What ! the Earl ?

Col. Green. No ; he had two,

Of whom the Earl was but the younger one.

I speak of the elder. Death, that struck your father,

Miss'd him ; and, as in spite at his escape,

Left him almost a broken heart—for much

He loved your father! Well; the fight was o'er;
 The second brother bann'd—flight was his chance;
 But you, an infant, must be left behind
 Without a friend.—He linger'd still for you;
 For well he knew his younger brother's ward—
 For reasons, now to tell were waste of time—
 Had more of danger than of safety in't.
 Still had he motives for soliciting
 That brother's aid—a purse without a doit!—
 He sought it. It was granted readily;
 For in succession, failing you, he stood
 Next to his elder brother.

Wilt. He *was* next.

I was, alas! no bar—I say “alas!”
 But for the cause.—It had rejoiced my soul
 That elder brother had been heir to all!

Col. Green. Again your father speaks.—Let me go on!
 Time flies.

Wilt. I heed not time!—I list to you!

Col. Green. Means were supplied. Upon the western coast,
 One lowering night, both brothers stood with you;
 Your hand in his who loved you as his son!
 A barque was in the offing, heavily
 Riding at anchor, bound that night to sail;
 A boat was waiting—

Wilt. Ah!—I recollect
 That father-uncle!—He leap'd into it
 With me in his arms!

Col. Green. Yes; while his brother stood
 And utter'd no dissuasion, though the waves,
 Warning the shore with louder waxing swell,
 Gave token that the sea was rousing up;
 Though the rough wind advised him of its mood,
 Bawling against you, as to turn you back;
 Though from your eyes the sun, just setting, hid,
 As if averse to tempt you with a look;
 Though on the land sat gloom and doubt and dread,
 As though it cried “God help you!”—not “God speed!”
 There stood that brother, like a barren rock,
 Above the shingles, that were following you
 With clamour, like rough friends, but kind, that wail
 “Good bye” to those they doubt to see again!

Wilt. We did not reach the ship!

Col. Green. 'Twas well!—She sank
 With every soul on board.—It was not meant
 That you should reach her, though 'twas thought you did,
 By those who wish'd you partners of her fate.
 Your course was changed advisedly; the land
 Was made again, though many miles away;
 Distance was safety to you!—Ask no more.
 Hands for your fosterage, on which you held
 Some claims of blood upon your mother's side,

Your uncle sought ; but, reaching found them cold,
 Not in defection towards you, but in death.
 They were proud ones !—The proudest must shake hands
 With Death at last !

Wilt. Then was my mother of
 A noble stock ?

Col. Green. She was. Inquire as yet
 No more. Thy uncle was no guardian for thee—
 Unsafe the ward of plots and enterprises—
 Heaven sent a friend at last !—he gave you to him.
 The nobleman who train'd you, Wilton, till
 You grew the man you are—who placed you with
 The Earl, who never half-redeem'd his pledge
 To see your fortunes better'd—but, beholding
 Your father's face in yours, gave credit to
 The elements for ruth he grudged them have,
 And through inquiries, back'd by power and gold,
 Proved his surmises true.

Wilt. Speak not of him !
 But tell me of that uncle—how fared he ?

Col. Green. Remain'd an outlaw still.

Wilt. Is he alive ?

Col. Green. Better, perhaps, of him we speak no more.

Wilt. Is he alive ?

Col. Green. Alive ?—You well may ask,
 When every hour the gibbet look'd for him.

Wilt. The gibbet !—Heaven !

Col. Green. Ay, sir. It had been well
 For you, your uncle in his bed had died !

Wilt. I heed not how
 My uncle died—I only heed his death.
 The manner of it, but for him, I wish
 Other than what it was, if such it was !
 I heed the shame ? Were he alive, and now
 In jeopardy of such extremity,
 With all the dismal stages yet to pass,
 I'd stand beside him in the felon's dock ;
 I'd lie beside him in the convict's cell ;
 I'd walk beside him to the fatal tree—
 Which, if I could, with marble I'd supplant—
 A monument, whereon I would record
 His honour'd name, and all he did for me,
 And under-grave my own in love and gratitude !

[*COL. GREEN rushes up to the table, throws himself into
 a chair, and hides his face in his hands.*]

What ails you, sir ? You are convulsed. Sir !—sir !
 What ails you ?—Speak to me !—Or can't you speak,
 Or don't you hear ?—You shake from head to foot.
 What shall be brought you ?—Whom shall I call for ?

Col. Green. [*Starting up.*] Call
 For Henry Sherbrooke !—If you know not him,
 Then find me Wilton Brown.—'Tis all the same—

Child—stripling—man—my eldest brother's son—
The boy that stood upon the beach with me
Twelve years and more ago!

Wilt. My uncle!

Col. Green. Ay!

Unscathed! Alive! as ne'er he was before.
The uncle in whose arms you lay, the night
We took the boat upon that stormy beach.

Wilt. Take me again to them, or else I drop!

Col. Green. Rouse thee, boy, rouse thee! Something
is to do!

Collect thyself—The Duke!—'Tis near the time!

Wilt. From what a trance have you awaken'd me
Of happiness, to what reality!

Col. Green. Reality! Why, Wilton, look on me;
Aged in my prime, the work of years outdone
By watchings, strugglings, strainings, spent in vain!
Of glory deeply smit, as you, with love,
Yet baffled in my wooing worse than you!
Reality! There's none, boy, but the thought
Of doing right! He grasps who holds to that!
You'll do your duty?

Wilt. Will I not?

Col. Green. You will!

Wilt. Uncle, 'tis death!—but I'll go through with't still!
[*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*A place near Kensington Palace.*

Lord Byer. This summons to the king fell out perversely.
As jaded traveller, when drawing near
His journey's end, feels every mile a league,
So, my revenge, at hand, but still delay'd,
Turns minutes into hours! Ten stages Time
Has paced since noon, still lagging more and more;
And now he seems to stop! Will he go on?
He's half-way to the next; yet, to my thought,
He has not stirr'd! Life, measured by suspense,
Lasts ages!—Talk of threescore years and ten!
A day, an hour, has durance of a life!
Yet am I ill at ease on more accounts
Than this. My colleagues eye me with strange looks;
Whisper apart! I heard them name—and more
Than once—Lord Sunbury.—Is he expected?
And if he is, my office near the king
Draws to a close. No matter!—I am still
The Earl of Byerdale! My brother's death,
My nephew's spurious birth, assure me that!
Whate'er hangs loose, hate can't unrobe me there.
I'll home! What keeps my coach? Will't never come?
I need its help! Impatience yearns for speed.

SCENE IV.—*A Chamber in LORD BYERDALE'S.**Enter the DUKE OF GAVESTON and LADY LAURA.**Lady Lau.* Why, father, come we hither?

Duke of Gav. They know best
 Who guided us. The ceremony here
 They judge, perhaps, with better grace perform'd
 Than in my prison-house. Their compact kept,
 The stipulation it was granted on,
 Although abandon'd as to hour and place,
 I shall fulfil, whate'er the hour and place,
 Much as my blood rebels!

Lady Lau. Came they not in
 Along with us?

Duke of Gav. Yes; but held back to speak.

Lady Lau. [*Aside.*] I saw no priest;
 I read no bridals in his looks—though love
 Was there—but such as finds its hopes a blank!
 Not once he took my hand, nor came so much
 As even within reach on't; when, had I seen
 One proffering step, I had met his half-way.
 I thought to be his wife to-morrow, and
 The day is farther off, if e'er to come,
 Or I mistake, when he shall call me bride!
 He comes!—Why comes he?—To forbid the banns!—
 I know it.—Can he find no other lips
 With theme so harsh to jar his lady's ear?

Enter WILTON and COLONEL GREEN, and LORD SUNBURY.

Duke of Gav. So far we have done your pleasure passively,
 Nor halt we yet. The stipulation
 Whereon our full enlargement was vouchsafed—
 Your union with my daughter—though foregone
 By your own choice, when by agreement due,
 Lies at your option still. This hand is yours
 When he, whose holy act of two makes one,
 Shall minister the nuptial ceremony.

Wilt. First let me bless this hand so proffer'd me!
 Bless for the life that it would give to me,
 Enrich'd by all that fondest heart of man
 E'er fancied in its wildest coveting,
 Of beauty, chastity, and goodness—all
 Enrich'd by holiest, most surpassing love!
 May plighting wait it from some happy palm
 Of purer blood than his who holds it now,
 Of clasp as honest—will as strong to cleave!—
 Else!—ere the priest for ever makes it his,
 May Heaven in its sweet mercy wrest it thence,
 And save the gift that else were cast away,
 As now 'tis torn from mine!

Lady Lau. Wilton!

Duke of Gav. My child!

Hold up! If, sir, my scruples sway this act,
This act, that gives them way, has vanquish'd them.
The Earl has kept his word, and the condition
Whereon 'twas pledged, and which I had withheld
With all my heart, with all my heart I yield.

Wilt. The Earl has kept his word, but was forestall'd.
To wed your daughter I was doubly bound,
And am so still, so you will have us wed;
Whereof the choice now solely rests with you,
Now fully freed from all contingencies.
My birth was yet a secret to me, which
I knew the Earl possess'd, and which to win,
I pledged an oath ne'er to divulge to you
The knowledge on't, while yet the trench remain'd
'Twixt you and liberty. The knowledge came,
And with it such abasement of my blood,
As, well I knew, no drop of yours would brook!
What course was I to take?—Time pacing on!
The hour almost within a stride!—your life
In jeopardy, as I believed!—your shame
The ransom, without option to refuse
Or grant!—my will beleaguer'd solemnly—
All that of endless din, and strife, and wrack
Is told of chaos, gather'd up and penn'd,
I felt within my soul!

Lady Lau. Is this man noble?

Is he not, father? If he be not, rend
All patents that make birth! Wilton, go on!
I see the end! you sought for other means
To set my father free?

Wilt. I did. A friend
Supplied me with them. 'Twas the king that oped
Your prison door. You are at liberty
Without the aid of barque or foreign land,
Without the gift of child or aught to me—
A man whose birth, what'er his truth may be,
Bearing, or reach, refuses him a name,
Drawing the breath he could not help but draw,
Unsanction'd by the priest!

Lady Lau. Why start you, father?

Duke of Gav. No priest the union of your parents bless'd?

Wilt. None, sir; what noble dame would wed with me?

Lady Lau. I—or I never wed!

Duke of Gav. Daughter!

Lady Lau. Where worth is,
Give honour, or nowhere! O, truth! lives shame
Where you abide? Manhood, go beg, if flaws
In your escutcheon point you out to scorn!
He who foregoes high fortune for a blur
That in his proper nature owns no germ,

She doubly should enforce her favours on!
 Confess it, father, noble as thou art!
 Thy blood it is that's speaking in thy child;
 To generosity be generous!
 Thy daughter's heart is wedded to his worth;
 Give him the thing that's second to her heart—
 The hand it nourishes!

Duke of Gav. Never!

Lady Lau. [After a pause, throwing herself on WILTON'S neck.] O, Wilton!

[LORD BYERDALE enters in the back-ground.]

Lord Byer. Tied!—Tied!—Fast tied! and now my triumph comes!

Solace for e'en disgrace! [Comes forward.] Joy, my lord duke!
 Joy of your son-in-law? I told your grace
 He was of noble stock, and told you true—
 My eldest brother's love-begotten son!
 His father's title and estates, 'tis true,
 Cleave not, by custom, to his parentage:
 But what o' that? Fowlers that miss the game,
 But yet come near to it, find comfort there!
 Your daughter had been married to an earl,
 Had but some dozen words been mumbled, ere
 Her husband's mother gave him to the light!

Wilt. My lord, we are not wed.

Lord Byer. How came you here?

'Tis false! Without the priest's due offices
 I took full heed no bolt should yield him way.

Wilt. The master of the prison drew the bolt.

Lord Byer. The governor?

Wilt. The governor of him.

The king's own order the good Duke enlarged,
 Enabled me to keep my oath, without
 Offence against my honour—snared by thee,
 Unnatural uncle! Thus of half its aim
 Thy malice balk'd, these are unscathed and free;
 Thy only victim thy own brother's son!

Lady Lau. Unscathed and free!—and thou a victim, Wilton?
 Lop off the part of a limb, and, if you will,
 Call what remains unscathed—there may be gain;
 But here is loss and loss, and nothing else!
 Unscathed! O Heaven!—and thou with galléd quick!
 Father, the word you gave, I ne'er gave back.
 It made me his by pledge—I stand so still!
 To fortune, honour, I had let him go,
 But not to woe and shame! *They* knot me to him!
 Wilton, I share thy voyage, come what will!
 I take the sea with thee whate'er thy boat,
 Howe'er the wind—where'er the shoal or rock,
 Yea, or the whirlpool, which a mouthful makes
 Of mariners and ship!—storms, strandings, wrecks,
 Engulfings, there am I, where you're afloat;

Be it but upon a plank--where you go down
I sink!

Col. Green. [*Tapping LORD BYERDALE on the shoulder.*] A
triumph worthy of a man,
To place a goodly youth in such a strait,
That virginhood, at dint of very ruth,
Casts chariness aside--pays heed to naught
Save love, at pity's promptings all resolved,
Whate'er the cost, to succour and to save him!

Lord Byer. Who is he that makes so bold?

Col. Green. One to bold things
Accustom'd; but allow'd ones, at the worst;
Not bann'd, at least, by Nature's common laws--
Whose life, at risk, he would not hesitate
To save at peril of another man's.
Yet--could not see his enemy take boat,
With certainty to founder when at sea,
Without dissuading him--yea, grappling him
With arms and heart--though foot to foot next day
Assured to stand against him--life 'gainst life!

Lord Byer. What are you?

Col. Green. One at home beneath a roof
As proud as even this!

Lord Byer. Wretch!

Col. Green. Give that name
To him who sold a falling monarch's cause
For hope to supersede an elder brother,
'Too stanch to heed the westing of the sun!
Or him who bore that brother's infant heir
Such love, he watch'd its fosterage with spics
Who roughly question'd, but persuadingly
Betray'd his orders to abstract the boy,
For what kind purpose, charity may guess;
Or him who for a second brother--bann'd!
Mulcted of scrip and friendship!--far and wide
Inquiries plied in hopes to find him--not
Alive, but dead--the man who made his breast,
'Thrice in one day, a shield to ward the blows
Had carried death to his!

Lord Byer. Whom speak'st thou of?

Col. Green. Of thee--but make amends within thy power,
By one benignant, all-absolving act,
Resigning title and estates to him
Should be thy brother's heir!

Lord Byer. To Wilton Brown!

That boy without a name--save such a one
As any dog may challenge--what it pleases
The fancy of the owner give to him--

Col. Green. [*Interposing.*] Silence, sir!

Lord Byer. Sir!--You know my title--

Col. Green. Yes;
And give it you.

Lord Byer. Sir!

Col. Green. Silence, sir, again!

Lord Byer. Who art thou, villain, that accost'st me thus?

Col. Green. No less a villain than your second brother!

Lord Byer. A traitor!—an attainted traitor! come
To wrest my rights from me! Wretch!—I attach you
In virtue of my office!

Lord Sun. That is gone.

Lord Byer. Lord Sunbury!—Return'd from France!

Lord Sun. In time

To thank your lordship for your patronage
Of this, his noble ward! farther, relieve you
Of the charge of office, whereto bear I here
His Majesty's commands. Your power is gone!

Col. Green. And, were it not, its virtue here were void,
By supersedence of the royal grace;
There is the king's free pardon! Farther; there,
Restoral of my proper patrimony,
Engulf'd, with the rest, by thy rapacity!
And, farther, still, to make that grace complete,
Here recognition of your nephew's rights,
As your first brother's son!

Lord Byer. There, 'twixt the king
And me the laws will stand! No spurious son
Can hold succession, such as he allows.

Col. Green. Who said a spurious son? I mean a son
In lawful wedlock born!

Lord Byer. Where is he?

Col. Green. There,
Bless'd in the bride his worth alone has won!
His worth, which, to the crowning trial put,
Has shown itself the paragon of proof!

Lord Byer. We must have documents for this.

Col. Green. You shall!
Such as the witness'd vouchers of his birth—
O' the nuptials of his parents—fully proved;
Of the grounds for their concealment full set forth—
Whereof some portion is referr'd to you—
Your brother's will, moreover, duly seal'd,
And fixing the succession on his child.

Lord Byer. May!—

Col. Green. Imprecations stick to guilty heads,
But from the innocent fall harmless off,
So do not utter them.

Lord Byer. What's in my heart
You can't prevent its uttering to itself.
Take your good fortune—Wear it—as I wish! [*Rushes out.*]

Lord Sun. Wilton, I give you joy!

Wilt. My benefactor,
That foster'd me in boyhood, welcome back!

Duke. [*Stepping between WILTON and LAURA.*] Wilton, I
know I must not ask your pardon.

All the atonement I can make, I do ;
And take it as thou wilt.

[Joins their hands.]

Wilt. With reverence,
With honour, gratitude, and endiess love !

Sher. [Rushing in.] I cannot be away, howe'er unbidden !
O, credit me for all a son should feel ;

I own to a tear, but yet it is not one
That falls at your good fortune. That I loved you,

You know—that I withheld the confidence
Which should in couples ever go with love,

Our honest uncle bear the blame, who likes
To see the way clear, ere he takes the road.

I am not one that will not venture forth

Long as a cloud hangs out a threat of rain ;

He is, and I was bound to do his will.

The king hath made the perfect clearing up !

'Tis true I am a loser ; but, indeed,

One that o'erlooks his losses—in your gains.

Wilt. Sherbrooke, we'll have one fortune as one heart !
Why, all goes well.

Lady Lau. All ?

Col. Green. All, if these our friends
Cry us Good speed, and parting bear no grudge :
Kind looks outstrip kind tongues. We part—good friends.

THE END.



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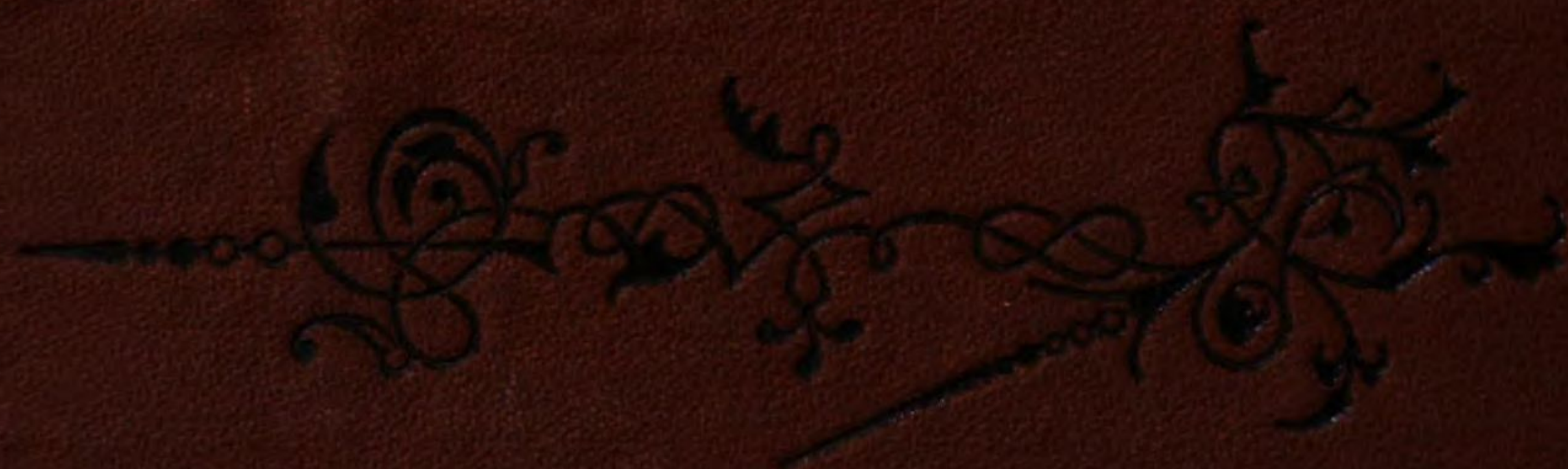
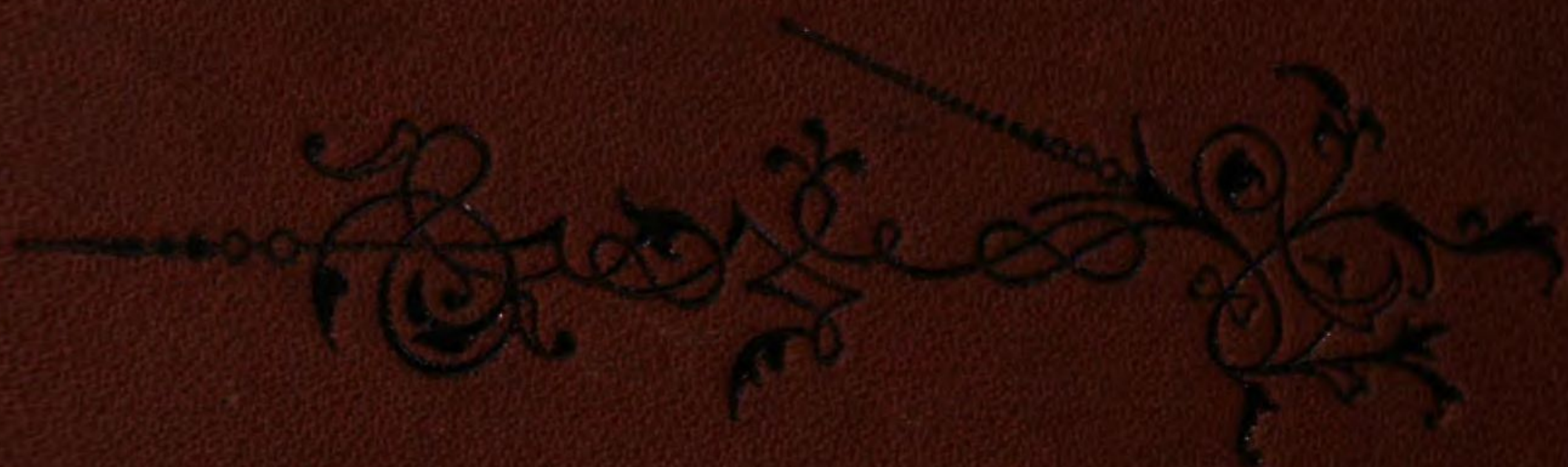
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Knowles, James Sheridan,

The dramatic works of James Sheridan Knowles

Bd.: 2

London 1873

P.o.angl. 193 m-1/2

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